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GUILTY OR NOT GUILTY:

A COMEDY,

IN FIVE ACTS.

FIRST ACTED AT THE

Theatre-Royal, Haymarket;

May 26th 1804.

WRITTEN BY

THOMAS DIBDIN,

AUTHOR OF

*The Jew and the Doctor; Birth-Day; Will for the Deed; Cabinet;
English Fleet; Family Quarrels; Il Bondocani; School for
Prejudice; Five Thousand a Year; St. David's Day; Naval
Pillar; Mouth of the Nile; Horse and the Widow; Valentine
and Orson, &c. &c. &c.*

THE FOURTH EDITION.

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1804

ADVERTISEMENT.

HOWEVER ample the Author's prior obligations to a most liberally indulgent Public, the reception given to this present attempt has infinitely added to the grateful sense he entertains of them. In adventuring on a new scene of action, he is proud to have experienced fresh proofs of that generous consideration which, on the part of the Audience, has ever been extended to his former efforts; and when the Acting Manager and all the Performers have also done their utmost in support of the Author, it would be as ungrateful to omit as it would be improper to particularize the force and effect of their several exertions.

It is by no means the least gratification, resulting from this occasion, that it has been the means of introducing him to Mr. Colman; a Gentleman whose open, friendly, and equal
3 conduct

ADVERTISEMENT.

conduct towards an humble follower of the Art in which John Bull's favourite Author so eminently excels, merits the most pointed and unequivocal acknowledgment.

* * * By referring to the Novel of "The Reprobate," the Reader will perceive how far this Comedy is indebted for its outline.

P R O L O G U E,

Written by the AUTHOR of the COMEDY.

Spoken by Mr. J. PALMER.

WHEN Spring to Summer ripening cheers the day,
And bids the vegetable world be gay;
When London windows every where disclose
The fragrant briar, and the blushing rose;
While the warm gale their balmy breath receives,
We venture to put forth our annual leaves.
A Nurs'ry this, where flowers of various hue
Depend for nurture, growth, and life, on you;
You, who the opening buds of efforts spare,
And ripen merit by your fost'ring care;
What'er may flourish here, 'tis your's alone
To elaim the gen'rous harvest, all your own.

In hopes removal may not caufe a blight,
A trembling scion we transplant to night
From *Covent Garden*, on that spot first plac'd,
And by the sunshine of your favour grac'd;
If from its stem no evergreens appear,
Yet has it blossom'd *more than once a year*;
Nor will it suffer for the change of air,
Your liberality is—every where.

Rear'd by the genial warmth your plaudits give,
Still by their aid the Poet hopes to live.
Then if luxuriant shoots he chance to bear,
Or barren spots offend you here and there,
Let not, untimely nipt by eritic frost,
For some poor branches, all the tree be lost:
As skilful gard'ners, while there's hope of life,
Before the axe, apply the pruning knife.

This were superfluous, did not custom ask
The Prologue ere we venture on our task.
Proceed we then to trial—that permitted,
With justice nere we fall, or stand acquitted,

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

LORD RIGID	Mr. ARCHER.
MAJOR CORSLET	Mr. R. PALMER.
MR. BALANCE	Mr. CHAPMAN.
EDMOND RIGID	Mr. ELLISTON.
CHARLES BALANCE	Mr. J. PALMER.
SIR HARRY POINTER	Mr. DE CAMP.
TRIANGLE	Mr. MATHEWS.
WILLIAM	Mr. TAYLOR.
GREGORY	Mr. GROVE.
DICKY	Master TOKELY.
LORD RIGID'S SERVANT...	Mr. ABBOTT.
LADY RIGID	Mrs. T. WOODFALL.
MRS. BALANCE	Mrs. WARD.
SUZETTE	Miss GRIMANI.
SOPHIA POINTER	Miss WOODFALL.
NANCY	Mrs. GIBBS.
DEBORAH	Mrs. KENDALL.

SCENE----- *A VILLAGE.*

GUILTY OR NOT GUILTY.

ACT I.

SCENE I.

A hall in the House of Mr. Balance.

Enter WILLIAM and NANCY.

NANCY. Nay, but William, do let me go in, I'm in such a hurry.

WILLM. I am glad of it. You always look pretty when you're in a hurry.

NANCY. Then you think I'd better not go in?

WILLM. No, not yet:—he's busy at his books, Mrs. Nancy. I beg pardon, because I mean no offence; but I'm never certain whether I be right in calling you Mrs. or Miss Nancy.

NANCY. And where's the difference?

WILLM. Why, Miss Nancy seems to signify as if it was—

NANCY. Too good for a servant?

B

WILLM

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WILLM. No, no; I am but a sort of a-servant myself, and I never thought any thing too good for *me*, if I could get it honestly and fairly, and so following. But, as I was saying, if I call you *Mrs.* it looks as if it wanted some other name besides Nancy to make it right and proper.

NANCY. La! Mr. William, I don't want another name.

WILLM. If you did I've one heartily at your service;—and if so be you should at any time take a fancy to be Mrs. Will Wallflower, and so following, why, you'll find it not a bad name, and very much at your service.

NANCY. I'm sure Mr. William I wouldn't rob you of your good name for all the world—though it's not the first kind offer you have made me, and I'm very much obliged to you.

WILLM. Why, as to that, you see, when I offer aught to any body, it's either because I like 'em, or because I can spare it. And if their accepting what little I'm able to give is a pleasure to *me*, why, I consider that *I* be the person to say thankye for the obligation.

NANCY. You are very kind;—but if you knew how I got my place in the family, perhaps you—

WILLM. As for how you got your place it's nought to me.—You've behaved well *in* it, and a good servant will never make a bad mistress.

I got

I got *my* place by jumping, and I don't care who knows it.

NANCY. By jumping!!

WILLM. Yes; and without jumping over the head of any one that had a better right to it. Did you never hear the story?

NANCY. No, indeed, Mr. William.

WILLM. Then you'd better get somebody else to tell it you; for when a man's oration is all about himself, he looks like a great *I* at the beginning of a chapter, that's spoil'd by ugly flourishes.

NANCY. Oh, if you get to your ugly flourishes I'm sure I shall never hear the story. I thought you was never to refuse me any thing.

WILLM. Well, then since you desire it, you must know that when young Mr. Charles, the son of our master, Mr. Balance, and I were boys, about eleven years ago, we were, at that time, exactly the same age, and, what is very remarkable, we continued so to this day.

NANCY. That is very odd indeed!

WILLM. Why, yes; for though young master cou'd beat me at learning, and read more of the Latin *Accidents*, and so following, yet, somehow, he could never beat me at any thing else, concerning which, one day, we had a quarrel.

NANCY. And did you quarrel with such a good-natured gentleman?

WILLM. That's as *he* tells the story; but I

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say *he* quarrelled with me, and talk'd about knocking my teeth down my throat. Now, seeing I was a hard-working lad, and he only a gentleman, I didn't think he stood any chance wi' me, and I made bold to tell him so.

NANCY. I hope you didn't fight?

WILLIAM. Why, without you had had a genteel education, and learnt boxing, as he did, you'd never guess what postures and capers he made at me, to shew the different ways he meant to thrash me; and having but *one* way of my own, I began to think if I didn't use *that* I should get the worst on't, so, as he was considering how to hit *me*, I hit *him*, without considering at all.

NANCY. How could you be so cruel, William?

WILLIAM. I don't know. I assure you I hate the thoughts on't to this day, for he was the last lad in the world I'd see knocked down, except myself,—and that shall never happen as long as I can stand upon two legs.

NANCY. But you made friends, I hope?

WILLIAM. Not *then*: he went away sulky, and I began to think he wasn't pleas'd, and the next time we met he said, though I might beat him at fighting, I couldn't beat him at jumping, and that put me up; for he jump'd off a high bridge right into t'river,—and ecod he jump'd so far I could see nought on him.

NANCY. You frighten me!

WILLIAM.

WILLM. So he did *me*; but as I was challeng'd, I thought I'd try to make a better jump on't than he did; so I not only went after him, but brought him back for company—and they sent for the Humane Society, Heaven bless 'em, I never shall forget when Charles open'd his eyes, and his father and mother hugg'd me, and said I should live with 'em as long as *they* lived, as if I had done aught that was wonderful, when, I'm sure, if every body had the rights on't, poor Charles had jump'd as far again as I did.

NANCY. Dear, good William, how I love your spirit!

WILLM. Why, *do* you? then let's make an end of the matter at once. [*Bell rings.*] There, this comes of telling long stories. Now master's bell rings, and if it hadn't been for that plaguy jumping history about boy's tricks, I cou'd ha' said somewhat to recommend myself by this time.

NANCY. You have lost no time, believe me, William; but tell your master that Major Corslet has been walking up and down, and looking at his windows this half hour.

WILLM. I'm glad on't—they've had a long bit of a tiff, I reckon. How the devil can people quarrel that like one another?

NANCY. Why, Lord, William, you and I quarrel very often; but the Major's a good man.

WILLM.

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WILLM. And so is old master, Mr. Balance; for though he were bred a merchant, and have only made a gentleman of his son, yet he keeps his accounts, and scolds his servants, and takes care of his tenants, and [*Bell rings*] rings his bell as if he were a Lord.—But what did you want to go in about?

NANCY. Only to tell him about the Major; but you can do that, while I see if the old gentleman's gone yet.

WILLM. So I can—I'll tell him the Major is —[*Bell rings.*] Coming directly, Sir. [*Exit.*]

NANCY. That William is a kind, good natured, sensible young man.—I've a great mind to have him—he's head man over every body here, and yet hasn't a bit of pride belonging to him; perhaps if he married me, that would alter the case. Lud! here comes Mr. Triangle, our village schoolmaster and library keeper—his talk may be more improving, but isn't half so pleasant as William's.

Enter Triangle.

TRIAN. Ah! what, Nancy, how are the worthy family to-day? Any news? Has your Lady done with the last novel? I saw the Major just now at the door; but as soon as he saw me, he described the segment of a circle
round

round an angle of the building, and in one moment was as far out of sight as the longitude.

NANCY. I know nothing of foreign parts.— But is the Major gone? I remember when he hardly ever left this house.

TRIAN. Your memory was always excellent; when the Squire's Lady put you to me for instruction, you got on rapidly, and were the most forward girl in the whole school.

NANCY. I *forward*? For shame of yourself!

TRIAN. To your credit be it spoken; and therefore out of pure friendship I come, first to see if the family want any thing from my library; and then, to warn you and all the females not to walk near the hermitage.—The reprobate is returned, the monster is come back, and his very touch is contamination.

NANCY. Have you been near him, Sir?

TRIAN. Me! no! He excites more terror than any modern novel in my catalogue.—His hypocrisy beats. *Blifil*—his villany is beyond *Fathom*, and he is the sum total of all manner of wickedness.

NANCY. Well, he never did me any harm, but I'll not go near him; I'll take your advice, because I'm sure you're a much better judge of wickedness than I am. [Exit.

TRIAN. A nice girl that! The Squire paid me well for her schooling, and I made her understand the multiplication table better than any lass in the parish.

Re-enter William.

WILLM. Ah, Mr. Triangle!—I humbly wish you'd step in to master a bit; he seems low-spirited, and not so merry like as he used to be. He's got that plaguy journal, as he calls it, on the table again; and setting down dismal things that happen'd long ago, makes but a gloomy sort of a *past* time I reckon.

TRIAN. *You* reckon!—has he dined?

WILLM. Yes, Sir; and there be a tiff of punch on table; but he takes no notice at it, though I made it myself for him.

TRIAN. That's wrong; for when the cloth is *subtracted*, a bowl of punch is too good an *addition* to be neglected; and perhaps I may not be too late to come in for a magnum bonum.

[*Exit.*

WILLM. Nay, t'bones be all gone as well as t'meat. That's a merry odd kind of a body; but this is his ciphering day, and his tongue runs like a slate pencil. To-morrow the boys learn to read Classics, as he calls 'em; and then he'll talk o' nothing but Cæsar's *Commendaries*, and Sampson's *Agonies*, and so following. I was his scholar myself once; but I had too good a head-piece to let in much learning—for to me his *Algebra* was all Greek; and his Latin was quite *proglymatical*, as he calls it.

[*Exit.*

SCENE II.—*A Dining parlour.*

Mr. Balance *discovered, looking over a large book—Pens, ink, punch, and glasses before him; Triangle standing at the other end of the table.*

TRIAN. He's quite abstracted, and minds me no more than a dunce does his lesson. I'll try another way [*fills a glass*] Mr. Balance I have the pleasure of drinking your health.

BALANCE. [*shutting his book*] Sir, I have the honour of thanking you—There; the account is balanced, and, errors excepted, I have to this day faithfully completed my journal.

TRIAN. You'll pardon presumption; but to a merchant who has quitted business his journal becomes little better than a waste book.

BALANCE. But in this book are entered all the memorable events of my life, it is both journal and ledger, and though it contains some intricate pages, I have closed no account without finding myself debtor to Providence.

TRIAN. It's astonishing how that book would be called for if it were in my library.—I hate flattery as I do techinals; but worth like yours, according to my *mensuration of solids*, would rouse the curiosity of the whole hamlet.

BALANCE. Swallow your punch, my good friend, and let's hear the news.—I'm told Major

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Coislet is returned from London, where he has been in search of his daughter.

TRIAN. Then he is come back alone, and looks as melancholy as Theodore Cyphon. Well, I little thought any lady of major Corslet's family was born to be marked with a spider's web.

BALANCE. Explain, Sir?

TRIAN. Certainly. You must know that our parish clerk, though he writes a bad hand, and understands no more of figures than a dancing master, has no small portion of ingenuity, about him, and can spin out a story

BALANCE. Like a Schoolmaster.

TRIAN. Excellent! He is, moreover, so jealous for the honour of his parish, and so rigid a censor of feminine delinquency, that he has carefully noted all such little offences in the church register, and so become *Numerator* and *Denominator* of every lapse of female virtue in this part of the country.

BALANCE. As if the memory of malignant censure were not, already, so tenacious as frequently to be the means of barring the return of penitence to virtue!

TRIAN. I, some years back, made a similar remark to him, in consequence of which he declined inserting *verbal* descriptions, and since contented himself by drawing with his pen, against every suspicious name, a small cobweb, which,

BALANCE. And does he dare continue—?

TRIAN. O dear, no—he has left it off ever since his own daughter eloped with the Excise-man. However, as the girl is now married, and the man has property, he laughs it off, and says the spider is turned into a mere money-spinner.

Madam, your very obedient—[*with a profound bow.*]

Mrs. BALANCE. Well, husband, we're never to be at ease ; the neighbourhood is to be disgraced again with the presence of that scandalous young man who bought the Hermitage.

TRIAN. O dear, true—I had quite forgot—
young squire Rigid, has come home as well as
the major; but shuts himself up closer than
ever.

BALANCE. His coming is unlucky. I have always suspected my son, Charles, had a hankering after an acquaintance with that unfortunate young man ; and though I detest prejudice, yet, what I have heard of him makes me tremble for the event of such a connection.

Mrs. BALANCE. Then exert your authority, and prevent it. Charles has more than once hinted a word or two in defence of the hardened wretch:

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wretch; and even says he has been known to perform charitable actions.

TRIAN. Why, *I* really have heard, that in *division* of *money*; he is sometimes very liberal, not that I credit it; for I can't say that *I* can't say that *I* ever had any *demonstrative* proof of it.

BALANCE. He may endeavour to palliate past guilt by acts of charity, nor can he take a better method. Practical repentance makes best amends to injured society.

Mrs. BALANCE. But the man who has assailed the virtue of his Mother-in-law, and attempted his father's life—

TRIAN. Must be too bad even for a place in a spider's web. But your son is coming, and my pupils by this time demand my presence: meanwhile I assure you there isn't a word in the dictionary, a book in my library, or any power in numbers, to express a tenth part of the grateful respect you derive from Titus Triangle.

[*Exit.*

BALANCE. A pert, coxcomical blockhead; but I believe there's no harm in him

Mrs. BALANCE. In *him*! he's a very sensible man—he keeps a school, a news-room, and a circulating library,—teaches the whole parish, and tells all the children that we are the most respectable people in it. I shou'dn't get a bob curtsey from one end of the village to the other,
if

if it wasn't for him. The world's grown so bad, Mr. Balance, that if we hadn't a civil school-master to polish the *rising* generation, I don't know what wou'd become of us.

BALANCE. And if the schoolmaster's talents center in nothing but teaching the *rising* generation to *sink* at your approach, I don't know what will become of us as it is.

Mrs. BALANCE. Here comes our son.

Enter Charles.

CHARLES. Sir, I have pleasant intelligence for you. I have seen and even conversed with the Major.

BALANCE. And he has found his daughter?

CHARLES. No, Sir; but he now seems anxious to recover his lost friend—he wishes to see you, and as he is a man of no ceremony, he don't know, he says, which way to set about it.

BALANCE. Then set the street door wide open, and if he can't find the way *then*, it will be more his own fault than ever it was.

Mrs. BALANCE. So it will, dear, so it will.—I faith, if he offers to come and make friends here, we'll be as ready as *he* is I warrant.

BALANCE. So we will, Wife—Order the Major's arm chair to be put close to mine—his favourite cup, and a long pipe to be put on the table; and, as he adores flowers, let some be put in the window; and then, if you don't do him a
pleasure,

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pleasure, you'll at least do your duty in attempting it.

Mrs. BALANCE. (*coarsely*) And sha'n't I do *you* a pleasure at the same time?

BALANCE. Your only asking the question is a pleasure.

Mrs. BALANCE. Ah! you're a kind old soul, that's what you are. [*Exit.*]

BALANCE. That's a good wench, bid 'em hasten before he comes. Well, Charles, your friend is at the hermitage, I hear.

CHARLES. *My friend*, Sir!

BALANCE. Well, your *acquaintance* then.

CHARLES. Do you not consider him a scandalous character?

BALANCE. What all the world says must be true.

CHARLES. But if there should be an exception to such a rule!

BALANCE. Then I wish it may be him, with all my heart; but a man who, besides charges of a still more serious nature, has been expelled the university, turned out of the army with disgrace, and associated with gamesters, must find some difficulty in exonerating himself.

CHARLES. Permit me to say, Sir——

BALANCE. Not a word. Your age and education entitle you to judge a little for yourself—Give me your honour never to abuse your father's confidence, and on your own head be the punishment of parting with your integrity.

CHARLES.

CHARLES. On that condition I assure you, Sir, that whatever errors may spring from my own inexperience, you shall never have to blush for those of my companions—the moment I discover they are unworthy the son of so kind and generous a father. *[Exit.*

During the above Scene the arm chair, flowers, pipes, &c. are placed as for the Major.

BALANCE. I'm willing to believe the boy, and to think myself happy in a good son; but mortals are apt to be mistaken. I thought I had a good wife for him in the Major's daughter—I thought the Major was my good friend; and in a very few days all those thoughts ended in disappointment. Yet, perhaps, I wrong the Major—I may have been rash, and forgot that the afflictions of a father had no room for the inferior considerations of friendship. The things, I see, are all as I ordered—*[sits down]*—Heigho! I remember when every day he used to pop his head in at that door, and say—

MAJOR. *[peeping in at the door]* How are you old Balance? Hey, my boy, how are you? I hav'n't seen you but once since the last time I knew how to be happy.

BALANCE. Sit down! sit down! You see I expected you. An old soldier shou'dn't be cast down for trifles—so you shou'd take it easy, and think no more of it, as I do. . . .

[half crying—sits down to write.]

MAJOR.

MAJOR. [*also affected*] So I do, you old fool. I was only thinking that when I quitted this apartment, I—what are you at there, eh?

BALANCE. Writing the first pleasant lines in my journal since we quarrell'd—That difference made a grand deficiency in the credit account of happiness, and this entry is the end on't.

MAJOR. Let's see—Let's see—[*wipes his eyes*] hang the spectacles—my old nose is so slippery they won't keep their place—[*reads*] “June the eighteenth, reconciled to my friend, Major Corslet, towards whom I had acted rather too harshly.”—No you haven't—No you haven't—What's the month? June—by this wet weather, [*wiping his eyes*] and the *fools* you and I make of ourselves, one would think it was April.

BALANCE. No matter—we'll never blush at cherishing the flower of friendship, because it happened to be watered by the dew of sensibility. Here, take this pipe—there has been no smoking since you were here.

MAJOR. I take it as the calumet of peace. I've been where Indians used this ceremony, and their sincerity has shamed us Christians. Come, give me thy hand—it was I who acted wrong, and therefore I think we had better say no more about it. [*Lights his pipe.*]

BALANCE. As you will. In this journal I have entered so many errors of my own, and
found

found so few excuses to place per contra, that I shou'd be a bankrupt in common honesty, were I not to make liberal allowance for the failure of a friend.

MAJOR. I should like to see now what you said of me, when I rashly tax'd you with being accessory to the misfortune of my poor daughter.

BALANCE. What *cou'd* I say? Your daughter herself rendered any insertion of mine, with respect to *you*, unnecessary.—You know her writing. [*presents the book.*]

MAJOR. Why [*takes the book*] yes, I—I— [*gives it back*] I wish you'd read it for me.

BALANCE. Prior to this, I had unkindly written—but I did not mean her to see it, that my mistaken opinion of her had almost determined me here to close my journal.

MAJOR. And well it might—ungrateful, unkind Suzette!—What could she say?

BALANCE. Why hear, only hear what she says [*reads.*] “Alas! why shou'd the errors
“ of one poor wretch close the journal of a thou-
“ sand acts of benevolence? Believe me, wor-
“ thy friend! I am less criminal than unfortu-
“ nate—resume your pen—write under my name
“ that forgiveness I dare not ask.—May my
“ father find his former amusement among his
“ favourite flowers, and henceforth only give
“ the unfortunate name of Suzette to those he

D

“ may

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“may find blasted by lightning, or broken by
“a tempest!”

MAJOR. Ay, ay, I *was* fond of flowers once,
to be sure, but—

BALANCE. But what, my dear friend?

MAJOR. You know what Shakspeare says—
“They all withered when my Suzy died.”

BALANCE. Died!

MAJOR. Yes.—Dead to honour, she is dead
to me. 'Tis a painful retrospect; but as it must
be once gone over between us, better now, and
done with. You wish to be informed of her
destiny.—What I know, I'll tell you.

BALANCE. Come, first we'll drink one glass
to old regards, when you and I were in India,
you a soldier, and I a merchant.

MAJOR. The child was then unborn could
interrupt our friendship. Well, we came to
England. *Your* journal was your hobby; *mine*
my flowers. My wife died, yours became, as it
were, the mother of *my* girl—she was to have
been the wife of your son—and one day, when
I had bought her a most beautiful Virginian
honeysuckle, it perished in bringing home—
an emblem of what I was to meet with in my
daughter.

BALANCE. I know all that: her indiscretion
soon betrayed itself.—I interceded—you were
violent—We parted—the girl disappeared—and
a year has passed since the village has even
forgone

forgone the pleasure of malignant pity to regret her absence.

MAJOR. I asked her to name the villain who had seduced her, and, in the same moment, swore most bitterly to sacrifice him to my injured honour—and, do you know, the girl refused to tell me who he was.

BALANCE. I should have guessed so.

MAJOR. I gave her a sum of money; made her vow, and that most sacredly, not to write to any one; made her change her name; took her parcel on my shoulder; accompanied her by night to where a stage coach cross'd the path; saw her safe into it, and then stood supported by the stick, on which her bundle lately hung, like the statue of Anger leaning on Despair.

BALANCE. I don't wonder at it. What coach?

MAJOR. I cannot tell—the night was dark—I stood till morning beam'd upon my head, and followed with my eye the coach-wheel track till it was lost in others—then returned homeward—you remember how—yet, had I *ten* daughters, thus they all shou'd go, even if I sunk beneath the conflict; and that, I fear, will quickly be the case.

BALANCE. And yet you went, but now, in search of her!

MAJOR. 'Twas a false report.

BALANCE. Then is her crime atoned—and here I write—"May the blessing of Heaven at-

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tend and console a dear unhappy girl, abandoned by her father!"

MAJOR. Abandoned, Sir! what right have you—

BALANCE. She was the daughter of my friend that *was*—you were too hasty—I told you so before.

MAJOR. Hark ye, Sir!—when I came here, I look'd for consolation, not reproach—But when again I enter these abominable doors you shall not, with impunity, insult a man of honour—Yes, Sir, of honour—nor shall you arrogantly judge of what amends that honour may require, when sullied by the shameless and unfeeling conduct of a once-beloved daughter.

[*rushes out.*]

BALANCE. He's gone again!—let him go—so much the better—I'll seek the wanderer myself; and if the consolation of a friend—she's not *my* daughter, to be sure, as he says—her father is the best judge—but fathers shou'd be forgiving—for my part, I was always too indulgent to my children, and I love the hussy so, that if my son, Charles, had disappointed *her*, as *she* has *him*, I'd have knock'd the rascal's brains out long ago.

[*Exit.*]

End of Act the First.

A C T II.

SCENE I.—*Inside of Triangle's house, very neatly fitted up in the modern cottage style—a door in the centre of the Scene, and one on each side; over the centre, the words "Circulating Library," in large letters; on one side, the "Reading Room;" on the opposite, "Academy;" the middle door is sufficiently open to shew a small book shop communicating with the village street.*

Enter TRIANGLE from the Library.

TRIANGLE.

So, so—in times like these it requires every man of business to be as watchful as Cerberus, in order to obtain a decent livelihood—and, egad, if I hadn't, like Cerberus, a triple head, I shou'd never have managed to become, at once, the superintendant of three literary departments, [*looking round*] "Academy," "Library," and "Reading Room,"—by which means I draw the whole village to my interest; the women read my novels; the men, my newspapers; and the children come to school. To be sure, the news-
room

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room is a little too close to the Academy, for my customers can't read for the chattering of the boys, and the scholars can't study for the quarrels of the newspaper politicians, who, while they damn the *Times*, and upset the *Globe*, are all ready to fight for the honour of the *British Press*.

Enter Dicky.

Well Dicky, have you carried out the books?

DICKY. Yes, Sir; here is the list of what's delivered, and what is wanting.

TRIAN. Oh, let's see [*reads*] "Counsellor Crab wants *Liberal Opinions*"—I'm sorry for that, for it's not at home. "The Tailor's wife has had *Mysterious Warnings*, and the Apothecary's journeyman, *Pills to purge Melancholy*." Now you must take *Tales of Terror* to the widow Tremor—*More Ghosts* to the Sexton's daughter, the *Curse of Sentiment* to the Butcher, *Melting Moments* to the tallow chandler, and *Old Nick* to the attorney.

DICKY. Yes, Sir; he, he, he! I'll take the Attorney to Old Nick.

TRIAN. No, no, there'll be no necessity for that. Get along, and do as I bid you.

[*Exit Dicky.*]

No business stirring to-day—library rather flat—no post from London to bring the papers, and the

the boys have half a holiday. Bless me! here's a trump card—a fine high phaeton, and four by honours—the gentleman alights, too—this way, Sir—Library, or reading room—newspapers, or novels, or would you please to rest here in the hall, Sir?

Bows in Sir Harry Pointer, who flings himself in an arm chair.

Sir HARRY. Any where to recover breath. I drove the last sixteen miles to a nicety, rather within time by your clocks—saw this was a sort of a house where one might learn the news, so stept in for a moment. You're rather snug here, my man.

TRIAN. Very, Sir—Seminary, Library, and Oratory, conducted upon the best principles of desk, rostrum and catalogue, and excellently govern'd by Ferula, Hammer, and Terms of Subscription.

Sir HARRY. You're an *odd* fellow, for you seem to do every thing by the *Rule of Three*.

TRIAN. My *practice* exactly, Sir.—Built the whole of this mansion upon the plan of *direct proportion*; for, says I—if the reading room give me half as much as the book shop, what will the *school* room do?

Sir HARRY. How the devil shou'd I know?

TRIAN. Pardon me—I mean, what will the academy *produce*?

Sir

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SIR HARRY. Plenty of blockheads, no doubt, while you are schoolmaster.

TRIAN. Ha, ha! facetious in the extreme. I wish we had the honour of your company, some evening, in the debating club.

SIR HARRY. Perhaps you may. I've some thoughts of getting settled in this part of the world.

TRIAN. That's lucky—If you visit our club, a man of your wit would be knocked down for a speech every five minutes.

SIR HARRY. That's one way of getting settled, however.—What sort of folks are your neighbours?

TRIAN. The most pleasant people in the world, and all characters in their way.

SIR HARRY. There's a pretty hunting box just by, they call the Hermitage, I suppose you know who lives there?

TRIAN. Is the gentleman a friend of yours, Sir?

SIR HARRY. That's no answer to my question. I can't say whether he is a friend or no; but I believe his father, lord Rigid, has some wish of marrying him to a sister of mine. What sort of a character does he bear in these parts?

TRIAN. [*aside*] O ho! mus'n't spoil a match—the lady may subscribe.—Why, sir, he is rather an odd—good sort of a—peaceable, quiet kind of a young gentleman enough.

Sir HARRY. Peaceable?

TRIAN. Very, Sir: he left the army from an objection to fighting.

Sir HARRY. The devil he did! is he a coward then?

TRIAN. O no, I can't think that; for every body else is afraid of his father, lord Rigid—now, I'm told, the young gentleman don't care two-pence for him, and never did any thing he was bid in his life.

Sir HARRY. A mighty dutiful kind of a son. He is a scholar I am told.

TRIAN. He must be a very great one; for they cou'dn't understand him at all at the university, so they desired him to go home again—then he's the most astonishing card player in the whole county.

Sir HARRY. Indeed! have you any proof of that?

TRIAN. By report only, Sir: for nobody here will venture to play with him.

Sir HARRY. [*apart*] It's rather lucky Sophy doesn't hear all this. Whose are the two neat houses on the right and left?

TRIAN. They belong to a merchant, and a major, Sir. The merchant is a rich man, tho' he lives plainly: the major is a bluff old soldier, rather poor, and extremely proud—he has a daughter, who—bless my soul! why there's a lady in

E

the

the phaeton all this while! won't she do me the honour to alight?

Sir HARRY. Oh, it's only my sister—the horses have got their wind by this time, and now I am off. When I come this way again, I shall, perhaps, buy one of your catalogues, and—[*a loud scream heard*] death and fury! the horses are off full gallop! my sister, yes, my sister, and my best set of greys, will undoubtedly be ruined. Stop the carriage! [Runs out]

TRIAN. [*Looking out*] Dear me, dear me! what an accident! and nobody offers to lend the least assistance—there they go—and there goes William—and there goes squire Charles, galloping—he has turned the horses—they're coming back, and now, he has saved the lady. I'm glad he has saved the lady!—Oh, how happy her brother will be! I hope Mr. Charles will—yes—here they come, Dick! run to the apothecary's for some sal volatile.—Deborah, bring a glass of water directly—this way, Sir—I'll assist you. [*places a chair*] Bless me! why don't somebody do something! I never saw such people in all my life!

[*Capers about, doing nothing. Charles and William bring in Sophia Pointer, insensible, and place her in the chair. Deborah enters with a glass of water, and assists to recover her.*]

CHARLES. Thank Heaven! she has received no hurt—the fright, alone, has overcome her. William,

liam, your brave assistance has added to what I am already in your debt, another obligation.

WILLM. To be sure there's an obligation for every body to assist when any body else is in danger of their lives.—Oh! t'lady comes to, you see—when she's quite well, I'll just step and see what's become o' t'poor horses.

TRIAN. I believe that has been the young gentleman's care—how d'ye do ma'am?

SOPHIA. [*recovering*] Was my brother hurt?

CHARLES. No, madam, he was not in the phaeton.

SOPHIA. True—I remember now—Oh, Sir! whoever you are, what can make amends for the service you have done me?

CHARLES. Your quick recovery will overpay me.

SOPHIA. That glass of water has revived me.

WILLM. [*apart to Charles*] Aye, but if young madam had but a drop o'summat in it, just to qualify it,—

CHARLES. Hush—for Heaven's sake.

SOPHIA. I am almost well, and will give you no further trouble. [*rising*]

CHARLES. William, run for our carriage.

[*Exit William.*]

Your brother, madam, may wish to see you home, or, if I might venture to request—

SOPHIA. You shou'd command, Sir! We are on a visit to lord and lady Rigid, some miles off

—believe me, I am embarrass'd in the extreme, for words to acknowledge so signal a rescue from destruction. I hope you have not suffered in effecting it?

CHARLES. Not in the least, madam, [*she turns to give money to Deborah*] unless, indeed, the impression—what a blockhead am I! every fine woman sets me in heroics; but one like this, I never yet beheld!

TRIAN. [*to Sophia*] Wou'd you do me the favour to walk into a room less public. Mr. Charles will have the honour to escort you. The carriage will soon be here, Ma'am.

SOPHIA. And my brother—

CHARLES. I'll seek him this instant.

TRIAN. Better let *me* do that—he's hard by, ma'am—Deborah, shew the reading room—that way Madam. [*Exit Sophia, led by Charles.*]—A most delectable young lady, sure enough! now if we divide this accident into its aliquot parts—we may find that three-fourths of two-sixths of the people who drive high phætons, ought to—

Re-enter Sir Harry.

SIR HARRY. Well—come—so far all's well. I've order'd 'em all to be bled; and if they catch no cold from the excessive heat, and exertion why—Eh—where's my sister?

TRIAN.

TRIAN. In the next room Sir, with a young gentleman, who has probably preserved her beautiful white neck from a vulgar fraction.

SIR HARRY. Bless me! I had forgot him—I'm sure he was very kind, for his own horse has slipt his shoulder; but I saw him taken care of, as well as my own. Who is the young man?

TRIAN. Son to the rich merchant I spoke of.

SIR HARRY. Oh! Which way, did you say?

TRIAN. This way, Sir.—Your horses are not hurt then?

SIR HARRY. No; nor I wou'dn't have had 'em hurt for a half my estate. I have four sets complete—and, as I never cross a horse that can't drink out of a cup of his own winning; 'twould puzzle even your schoolmaster's art of calculation to put a proper value on 'em.

TRIAN. You'll pardon me there, Sir; for, according to the well-known progression of Arithmetic, if you were only to ask a farthing for the first horse, a halfpenny for the second, and so double it till you came to the twentieth, you might even take in the knowing ones.

SIR HARRY. Psha! you're as ignorant as if you had never seen a stable in all your life.

[Exit into the school-room, and instantly returns]

Why, zounds, I've made a mistake, and got into the school-room.

[Goes into the reading room.]

TRIAN.

TRIAN. Now, in my opinion, you made a greater mistake in coming out of it, before you had finished your education.

Enter a Servant in a rich livery.

SERVANT. Pray, are Sir Harry, and Miss Pointer, here?

TRIAN. Who, young man?

SERVANT. Sir Harry Pointer, and his Sister, —The young lady who had like to have been thrown out.

TRIAN. Oh, yes—is the brother a Baronet? I took him for a horse dealer! Yes, they are in the next room.

SERVANT. Then, be so good as say lord and lady Rigid are in the village, and having heard of the accident, will call in a few minutes to wait on the lady home. *[Exit.]*

TRIAN. Lord and Lady Rigid! dear me, I shall have my house full of elegant company! Here'll be another bustle! Here, Deborah! tell lord Rigid—no, I mean, tell Dicky—No.—I'll tell him myself—His lordship's name would cut a pretty figure at the top of the subscription book—and if I can but muster up courage to ask—or, perhaps, Mr. Charles wou'd ask him or—I could make one of the boys write a letter, or—
Enter Sir Harry, Charles, and Sophia, from the reading room.

Sir. Harry, I beg pardon for not knowing—
your

your title sooner; but the right honourable lord Rigid's servant has been here, to say that his lordship, and her ladyship, will wait on your sister immediately.

SIR HARRY. That's lucky! his lordship said he shou'd drive this way.

Enter William.

WILLM. Carriage is ready, Sir.

SOPHIA. [*to Charles.*] We shall have no occasion, now, to intrude; but is not this the young man, who so readily took me out of the phaeton, while you were stopping the horses?

WILLM. I am sure madam, I meant no offence. I handled your ladyship rather rudely, I believe; because I thought when a lady of fashion gets a tumble, her garments be too fine to save her from the hard ground, and so following—so, there wasn't overmuch time for compliments, or happen I should have been a bit more mannerly.

SOPHIA [*offers a purse*] Pray, oblige me by accepting this.

WILLM. Has *master* been paid for doing his duty?

SIR HARRY. Oh, your master's a gentleman, you know.

WILLM. Yes, Sir; I do know, and I always likes to follow a gentleman's example,—I did so in helping that beautiful lady, as master called her—

her—Why, yes you did, Sir—you know you did—And if *he* thought the action too good to be paid for, I don't see any harm in a poor man's taking pattern by his betters. *[Exit.]*

TRIAN. That lad went to my school! and wants nothing but good reading and writing to make him a credit to me.

SOPHIA. *[to Charles]* You must assist me in some mode of acknowledging his disinterested worth.

CHARLES. You see the force of female accomplishments, madam—if honest William had been of any use to your *brother*, instead of *you*, he'd have accepted whatever gratuity he chose to offer.

Sir HARRY. And welcome, to; I'd rather give five guineas than have my neck broke, at any time.

Enter Lord and Lady Rigid.

SOPHIA. My dear lady Rigid, this is attention indeed; but for the gallantry of this gentleman, and the intrepidity of his servant, we had never met again in this world.

Lady RIGID. I congratulate you sincerely on your fortunate escape. May we learn to whom we are indebted?

Lord RIGID. Is it possible you do not know Mr. Balance, the gentleman who did me the honour to oppose me in the last Election?

CHARLES

CHARLES. That opposition arose from no want of respect to *you*, my Lord, but from indispensable obedience to the commands of a father.

Lord RIGID. There my Lady—another proof how fortunate *other* people are in their children.

Lady RIGID. Pray, my lord, consider we are observed.

Sir HARRY. Oh! true—They tell me, my Lord, your Son is rather a sort of a—

Lord RIGID. Sir! have you any thing to say against my son?

Sir HARRY. O dear, no, not I—it was—

TRIAN. [*much alarmed*] No, my Lord; nobody here ever said a word against him. I'm sure I took no small pains to convince this gentleman, that all the ill-natured reports, which, by the bye, are in every body's mouth—

Lord RIGID. And, did you dare—?

[Triangle gets out of the way.]

Sir HARRY. Zounds! No! Your Lordship mistakes the man—he said your son was—

Lady RIGID. It is not necessary to say more here—It will be for this young lady to ass her opinion on his merits—as it is our intention to call for him at the Hermitage.

F

Lord

LORD RIGID [*apart to Sophia*] Miss Pointer, I shall once more repeat to you, that it was your father's last wish our families should be united, and most of your fortune comes into my possession, unless you marry Edmond Rigid.

SIR HARRY. [*who had listened*] Yes; but it was hardly fair of father not to leave the money to *me*, in case Sophy refuses.

SOPHIA. I have only to regret that the money was left at all—had my father *lived*, I should have been less delicately situated.

LORD RIGID. You will always find *me* scrupulously *just*. I never broke a promise, or infringed on a rule once laid down in my life.

LADY RIGID. It wou'd have been better if you had.

LORD RIGID. It does not become you to say so.

SOPHIA. Shall I attend your ladyship? But we forget my preserver.

SIR HARRY. Odsheart! dont let's do that—Your lordship must ask him to dinner.

LORD RIGID. I beg pardon; but I have made a rule to ask no visitors who hav'n't first left their cards at Rigid House, or to whom I have not been honour'd with a formal introduction.

CHARLES. And I have made it a rule never to intrude, nor even to suffer the most attractive motive [*looking at Sophia*] to carry me into any sphere, where my independence, as the son

of a British Merchant wou'd be degraded by the want of a cordial reception.

LORD RIGID. You mistake me, Sir! it is not my plan to offend any one. You have acted nobly by my Ward;—in return, if there is any thing you would ask, which my influence can effect, either in favour of yourself or friends, you or they shall readily command it.

TRIAN. [*apart to Charles*] Ask him to subscribe to my library.

CHARLES. Shou'd circumstances render a request from me either proper or necessary, I shall certainly avail myself of your Lordship's politeness.

LORD RIGID. And I shall be punctual in the observance of my word. Come, Ladies—good morning, Sir.

CHARLES. [*to Sophia, as they go out*] Miss Sophia!

SOPHIA. [*earnestly*] I hope we shall meet again.

[*Ex. Lord and Lady Rigid, and Sophia.*]

SIR HARRY. [*to Charles.*] Give us your hand, heartily—you and I must be better acquainted, and if old Regulus won't ask you to dine with *him*, come, and dine with *me* at the King's Arms.—The place must be agreeable, for my horses are there—and I shall neither drive them

home, nor give away my sister till I like, to please the first lord in the land.

CHARLES. For an hour or two I am engaged, Sir; but name your time, and I accept your invitation.

Sir HARRY. Do you?—that's hearty! We must dine early, because I've some way to go—Say *four* for half past, and I'll be with you at five to a certainty. [Exit.

TRIAN. That's some new fashionable way of counting, I suppose—don't you think so, Sir?

CHARLES. Think! I think I never saw such a delightful girl in my life?

TRIAN. Nor I—I wish she had put down her name—its such a pretty one. *Sophia!* She's a namesake of Sophia Western—What a happy man he must be!

CHARLES. Happy, indeed! but I fear insensible.

TRIAN. No doubt of that—he's been on the shelf in my shop these two months.

CHARLES. He! Who?

TRIAN. Tom Jones.

CHARLES. Damn Tom Jones!—it shall be so—I'll seek my friend Edmond instantly—and if it interferes not with the happiness of a friend, and *she* consents, not all the rules nor all the Rigids in creation shall keep me from Sophia.

[Exit.

TRIAN.

TRIAN. I believe this is the first day of my introduction to very fashionable acquaintance.—And this is the first time I've had my house quite full of company, who took no more notice of the master of it, than if he was a post, and left him not one halfpenny the better for their gracious condescension. [Exit.

SCENE II.—*A parlour at Major Corslet's, at the back a bow window open to the ground, looking into a flower garden, where several stands of ruin'd flower pots are seen, and others in the recess of the window.*

Suzette enters from the garden, cautiously looking round.

SUZETTE. Not here! O heavens! with what terror do I steal through apartments where oft I have bounded with delight to meet a much-loved father—Spirit of parental justice, if the unfortunate Suzette be permitted a hearing, haply she may appease thy angry dictates. A whole year has passed since. Hark! 'tis his well-known footstep! I cannot summon courage yet to meet him—[retiring] I will pursue my first intention, and, by a well-meant stratagem, discover how far an offending child may dare his presence.

[Exit through the garden.

Enter

Enter the Major, ruminating.

MAJOR. Yes, yes—she *feels* as well as I do—and she wrote in the Journal—“ Let him only “ call those flowers by the name of Suzette, that “ are blasted by lightning, and broken by a “ tempest,” [*looks towards the flower stands*] All the *favourites* were called Suzette once—They bloom’d fresh, young, and beautiful—they droop’d, they were destroy’d — therefore they may be call’d Suzette *now*—I hate the sight of them—there are other windows in the room, to give light, as well as this [*draws a curtain before the garden window*] I’m glad, however, the neighbours dont know I really went to seek the Girl.

Enter Gregory (an old Servant).

GREGORY. Sir, Mrs. Nancy has got a letter from her master, Squire Balance, and wishes to know if she may deliver it.

Nancy enters.

Now, who bid you come up without leave?

NANCY. Sir! Major Corslet, mayn’t I come in?

MAJOR. Yes—no matter who comes now. There was a time, when the sound of a female voice

voice at that door always announced pleasure to me.

GREGORY. Ay, that was in Miss's time: but I'll never mention *her* to your honour, I'm determined. [Exit.]

NANCY. I'm sure, Sir, I came with all the pleasure in the world with this note from my master.—William *was* to have brought it; but he's not in the way: and I wouldn't have him get anger on any account.

MAJOR. I had determined to receive no more messages from your master—to open no more notes.

NANCY. Then shall I open him for you, Sir?

MAJOR. [*taking it.*] No—your master's a man of no resolution—that's what I dislike him for—he quarrels, relents, and never sticks to his purpose as I do. You see, it was by mere accident I broke the seal.

NANCY. I'm sure, Sir, if you knew how he talks of you,—and as for Mr. Amen, the parish clerk, he has sent for him, and given him such a mortal set-down on your account—You never knew the like.

MAJOR. What's Mr. Amen to me?

NANCY. I was in hopes such a thing wou'd'nt come to your knowledge, Sir; I'm sure, if it was any book but a church book, I'd tear the leaf out with my own hands.

MAJOR.

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MAJOR. What leaf?

NANCY. Every body do know what that web do mean, and are only puzzled to make out who the wicked spider stands for in the middle of it.

MAJOR. Spider!—Web!—What the devil do you mean?

NANCY. Nay, Sir, you musn't mind it—it's quite a common thing in our parish, when any unfortunate girl—

MAJOR. I comprehend—It's all as it shou'd be—Mr. Amen is in the right—It is his duty to set up beacons and warnings, and webs, to caution female flies not to play around the flame. He's a much younger man than I—but if this cane don't fly across his back, may it fail to protect its master against scoundrels!

Enter William.

WILLM. Sir! master has sent me to know if you have got a note that——

NANCY. Yes, William; I brought it. Won't you read it, Sir?

MAJOR. There are no *spiders* in it, are there? Let's see—Come, I'll make a fool of myself once more, and shake hands with your master for the last time; return to my cottage; lock myself from the world, nor shall the voice of the Syren herself tempt me from my solitude a single step—[*reads.*] “Intelligence to astonish,
“and, perhaps, delight you,—News of your
“daughter”

hers are no more to compare to yours than——

NANCY. Hush!—tell me of the lady—and so she was run away with by some sad man, I suppose?

WILLM. No; by four long-tailed grey Galloways—and so I was thinking as accidents come before we look for 'em, if any thing was to happen to me, why, perhaps, you wouldn't feel altogether so comfortable as you do at this moment.

NANCY. Dear me, William, how you do talk!

WILLM. So, having saved up a small matter in sarvice, I thought fit to let you know, that if I shou'd die before we get wed, which shan't happen, if I can help it, you'll find in the right hand corner of the left little drawer, in my chest, a small bag, containing all my worldly property, in money, which together with my wearing apparel, you are welcome to make use of, whenever you please.

NANCY. Me! wear *your* apparel, William! why, what a foolish man!—you've made me cry, as if it was all in earnest.

WILLM. And it *is* in earnest.—And it's a great *pleasure* to me to make you cry, for it shews that you be good, and tender hearted. And therefore it is to be hoped, that whenever your loving kindness and good nature brings you into danger from the falseheartedness of mankind [*taking her hand*]

hand] you'll never want the guardian angel of prudence to take care of you; and if *I* shou'd ever be so wicked as to mean you any harm; and so following, that my conscience may say to me—

SUZETTE. [*suddenly drawing the window curtain*] William!

NANCY. Bless me, William! what was that?

Suzette comes forward.

WILLM. Goodness look down upon us, and keep us from all manner of misfortunes, if that isn't the ghost of madam Suzette, never trust me!

SUZETTE. Don't be alarm'd—I didn't willingly listen to you; but as my moments here are very precious, and you seemed to forget you were in a strange house, I was obliged to interrupt you.

WILLM. I am very glad you did, and so is Nancy, I dare say.

NANCY. Me! I am sure I have no reason to be glad.

SUZETTE. I hope you were making no bad use of her good opinion.

NANCY. No, Miss, he was making his will.

SUZETTE. I know the absence of my father, and come here to make an experiment which admits no loss of time; but, as you hope to be happy in each other, do not, pray do not betray me.

WILLM. Never, Miss—William is not the man, nor she neither, to betray a secret, especially when it hasn't been told us.

SUZETTE. I only wish you to conceal your having seen me; but you, no doubt, think it criminal to favour a wretch who has embittered the latter days of an indulgent father.

NANCY. I'm sure we always were sorry, very sorry for you; and so was your poor father, miss—he never would bear the sight of a single flower of your planting, and has often said, that goodness and garden-pots, when once nipt in the bud, never flourish any more.

SUZETTE. Perhaps he may be able, without *disgrace*, to pardon an offending child, or should he not, his flowers may bloom again.

NANCY. But not like what they used to be when *you* planted them.

WILLM. Aye, then they were so beautiful—on the right, and on the left, and in the middle—I think I see 'em now, just like——

SUZETTE. Like this? (*draws the curtain, and discovers all the stands beautifully replenished*)

NANCY. Why, sure as sure, we be all bewitch'd!

WILLM. We had better go indeed, for, somehow, I begin to feel a little queerish.

SUZETTE. There is nothing to be alarm'd at—you have only to be faithful to your promise, and perhaps the innocence of Suzette may thus

appear with renovated life, while a parent's forgiveness, like the all-cheering sun, shall cherish its return, and ensure its continuance. [*Exit.*

WILLM. I don't exactly understand all that—but we'll go home, and keep her secret safe, and, as Mr. Triangle says, if I had as many lives as Plutarch, I never shou'd forget how suddenly zurely she did pop in a top of us. [*Exeunt.*

End of Act II.

ACT III.

SCENE I.

An apartment at Mr. Balance's.

Enter Balance and the Major.

BALANCE. But doesn't this carry something like consolation with it? The servant said she was married, and looked well and contented.

MAJOR. How dare she look well and contented, when her poor old father, for aught she knows, may be breaking his heart.

BALANCE. Come, come—I foresee that her return is the prelude to a reconciliation.

MAJOR. Which must be acted without me—and I begin to suspect that you have some share in the plot of it.

BALANCE. I wish I had, Major—any plot that has domestic peace for its object deserves to be applauded. Nay, don't go—stay here, and let us have one of our old-fashioned social evenings together.

MAJOR. No; I'll go home—I'm fit for no place else—besides, she may call.

BALANCE. *Who* may call?

MAJOR. Who! Why, my daugh—now, what

an old, insinuating, pumping, sly piece of artifice thou art. You've found me out, you think.

BALANCE. Long ago, Major—you have all the proper feelings of a man, except that of not being ashamed of 'em.

MAJOR. Perhaps, Sir, you think I wish for the day to reconcile me to Suzette, as much as she does.

BALANCE. I'm sure of it.

MAJOR. And I'm asham'd of it. It is not for *ourselves* we shou'd pardon or punish our children—'tis for *society*—and if my daughter is to be restored to the privileges she has forfeited, because I am an easy blockhead, every father has a right to accuse me of taking from innocence the just belief, that her path once quitted, is seldom thoroughly regained.—So, let's talk of something else. You didn't happen to hear who this husband of her's is, did you?

BALANCE. I thought you wish'd to change the conversation.

MAJOR. So I did—I had no intention to speak of *her* when I asked about her *husband*. I only wanted to know if the poor little innocent child—Why, what do you laugh at, you heard-hearted Hottentot? The *infant* never offended me.

BALANCE. True;—and if the father is an honest man—

MAJOR.

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MAJOR. And, provided the girl is really married.

BALANCE. Come, I know you'll make us all happy—I know you'll act as you ought, and that when you do forgive, you'll do it heartily.

MAJOR. You do as you like both with her and me. I hope she'll bring the child—not that I shall see it at first.

BALANCE. Do you mean to send for her?

MAJOR. No;—but *you* do, don't you?

BALANCE. Upon my honour, I know not where to find her: but the moment she re-appears, I shall have ample intelligence.

MAJOR. Well, then, you shall go home with *me*; and if the old cottage is to look gay once more, the smile of friendship will best prepare it for the return of paternal pleasure.

BALANCE. With all my heart.

Enter Mrs. Balance and Triangle.

BALANCE. My dear, I am glad to leave you in such entertaining company. I am going to pass an hour with the Major—to whom I have been relating something I heard about a certain lady in a carriage, who—

MAJOR. [*apart*] My daughter, of course.

TRIAN. Oh, that's all over the town by this time.

BALANCE. Indeed!

TRIAN.

· TRIAN. The horses set off with her—never saw any thing so tremendous in all my life.

· BALANCE. What! set off with her?

· TRIAN. Full gallop.

BALANCE. Was she hurt?

· TRIAN. I believe not—your son, Charles, is the man after all—and if the other gentleman don't take care, spiders webs may not be confined to—
[*Balance stops his mouth.*]

MAJOR. Cease your impertinence, and tell me whether Suzette has suffered from being run away with?

· TRIAN. Why, really, that question is such a delicate one—

Mrs. BALANCE. He only means, that you men are so unmindful of females, that a dashing baronet left his sister to the mercy of a phæton and four, while he was talking nonsense in a news-room.

· TRIAN. In the *hall*, Madam. Nonsense and my news-room are incompatible.

MAJOR. Why, this has nothing to do with my daughter?

· TRIAN. Not that I know of, upon my honour.

BALANCE. Well, but what has it to do with my son?

Mrs. BALANCE. Your son behaved like a man, and saved a fine young woman, who was

H

on

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on her way to be married to young Rigid, the Reprobate.

BALANCE. Saved her! what, from the marriage?

TRIAN. No, sir; from the stocks, in the market-place:—for if he hadn't stopt the horses where he did, she'd have been overturn'd there to a certainty.

MAJOR. And sooner than a daughter of mine shou'd marry such a monster as young Rigid, she shou'd sit in the stocks all her life-time.

[Goes up stage.]

BALANCE. Well; but who is this young lady?

Mrs. BALANCE. We don't know; but Mr. Triangle says her brother is quite a character, whose conversation is—

TRIAN. Always in the stable, Madam—a perfect Gulliver from the Houyhnhnms—he asked Mr. Charles to visit him; if he does, I dare say, he'll find his valet de chambre, a farrier; his cook; a bit-maker; his house built in the form of a horse-shoe, and nothing for dinner but a saddle of mutton.

BALANCE. But, is the girl pretty?

TRIAN. Geometrically perfect:—her figure is the line of beauty, each of her eyes a circle of enchantment, her face oval, her nose a right-angled triangle; her waist an elegant inverted cone; and her pretty little feet taper as a pair of compasses.

Mrs.

Mrs. BALANCE. Then, Charles, I suppose, is over head and ears?

TRIAN. He has entered a servitor in Cupid's college, and if he finds a *fellowship* in the lady's affection, wou'd willingly quit his *batchelor's degree* to become *head* of a family.

BALANCE. Then you may tell him, Sir, that I am *one* head of *this* family, and there is the other (*pointing to Mrs. B.*) And that not all the geometrical figures, triangular eyes, and circular noses in the world, shall excuse his giving himself away without our permission.

MAJOR. (*comes forward*) Come, come along, friend Balance. I can think of nothing now, but this girl of mine.

BALANCE. Well, but, my dear, I beg Mr. Triangle will tell you how far Charles is concerned in this affair.

Mrs. BALANCE. Ay, ay, I'll get all out of him, you may depend.

MAJOR. Was ever any thing so stupid as a doating old father! Here are you talking about Charles, who is quite old enough to take care of himself, while my daughter may—yes, she *may* be waiting for us at home.

BALANCE. Was ever any thing so stupid as a doating old father!

[*Exit with the Major.*]

Mrs. BALANCE. And, now, Sir, with regard
H 2 to

to Charles, you say, that, when the lady was gone—

TRIAN. Yes, Ma'am, when she was gone, I express'd my wonder to Mr. Charles at her not offering to peruse my triple list of scholars, subscribers, and news readers—I'm sure the library ladies are of the first fashion by their being so plaguy hard to please—There's lady Gothic, you see, at the head of them.

Mrs. BALANCE. Fiddle of lady Gothic! so, Charles—

TRIAN. Don't say a word against lady Gothic.—She's the best customer I have to my back—Reads marvellous romances all day; sups full with horrors every night,—and hangs her great hall full of black plumes, brazen bucklers, steel gloves, and iron skull-caps.

Mrs. BALANCE. Yes, truly, her wonderful books are so overcharged with *spirits*, that she couldn't read by candle light, without setting her house on fire.

TRIAN. Which enabled her to build a *new* one in the *old* style, in which all the furniture is most venerably inconvenient, and there isn't a dresser in the kitchen, that doesn't put one in mind of Arthur's round table.

Mrs. BALANCE. Well, Sir, if you will but oblige me with what pass'd between Charles and the lady, I'll double my subscription directly.

TRIAN. Will you? Then I'll just read a small
prospectus

prospectus I have drawn up, setting forth 'he several advantages of each establishment, and concluding with a poetical invitation to those who are fatigued with learning and politics, to take recreation in the regions of Romance, which, in eighteen lines I have thus described.

Mrs. BALANCE. Nay, but if you won't favour me—

TRIAN. O yes, I will; sit down, and I'll favour you directly. [*she sits reluctantly—he reads*]

“My cottage, tho' small, noble company owns;
You'll meet such at very few tables:

I breakfast with *Pamela*, dine with *Tom Jones*,
And sup with the beasts in *Gay's Fables*.”

Mrs. BALANCE. [*with impatience.*] Very clever! and so the lady and Charles—

TRIAN. [*reads.*]

“With *Peregrine Pickle* I season my fare,
And when weary I lay down my head,
I've Sir *Launcelot Greaves*
To keep out the thieves,

While I take *Betsy Thoughtless* to bed.”

Mrs. BALANCE. [*rises*] Well, if ever I heard——

Enter William.

WILLM. Madam, my master left word —

TRIAN. Hush, William!

[*William whispers Mrs. Balance, who goes out.*
—William sits down in her chair, and Triangle
not observing him, continues reading.]

“ Tho’ my guests are of note, no distinction
is seen,

From the rank of a king to a tinker,
And oft *Clary Harlowe*, as fine as a queen,
Reposes on *Humphrey Clinker*.

Don Quixote with *Roderick Random* agrees,
As bound in good manners to do so ;

And smart *Peter Pindar*

Cock’d up in the window,

Looks down upon *Robinson Crusoe*.

[*Towards the last two or three lines Triangle rises with the energy of repetition, and at the conclusion looks down to the chair, where he supposes Mrs. Balance to be sitting, and to his surprise sees William.*]

WILLM. I’ve read *Robinson Crusoe*, he lived on an uninhabited island, where the folks were all black, and wanted to feast upon Friday.

TRIAN. I thought your lady was sitting here.

WILLM. Yes, Sir, but when you talked of taking Miss Betsy to bed, she thought it time to rise.

TRIAN. And how dare you take the liberty of sitting in presence of a preceptor, who blushes for your ignorance?

WILLM. It’s kind of you, Sir, to do more for me than you would for yourself.

TRIAN. But what can one expect from a blockhead, whose scholarship never went further than *Dilworth*; and who, unable to imbibe a taste for letters beyond words of five syllables,

ran

ran away from school because his last lesson was in-com-pre-hen-si-ble. [*Exit.*]

WILLM. And so it was—and if I cou'dn't understand it, I'm not the only young man that left off after learning just enough to confuse him. [*Exit.*]

SCENE II.—*A romantic garden at Edmond Rigid's [on one side a Pavilion].*

Enter Lord and Lady Rigid, and Sophia.

[*The latter walks up the stage.*]

Lady RIGID. Nay, my lord, why so impatient? our having called on Edmond was unexpected on his part. I'm sure he meant no disrespect to you; but so conscious was I how he would feel on the occasion, that I have ordered the coach to remain.

Lord RIGID. Your ladyship was right—and we'll instantly profit by your foresight.

Lady RIGID. And yet, perhaps, if you were to return to him—or shall I endeavour to convince him?

Lord RIGID. No; I have forbidden him to speak to you, me, or any of the family, until he accepts this lady as his wife.

[*Sophia comes forward.*]

Lady RIGID. Shall Sophia speak to him? she seems to wish it.

Lord RIGID. To what purpose?

SOPH. To entreat him, for my sake at least,
if

if not for his own, never to offer his hand, where affection, on either side has so little chance to follow its acceptance.

LORD RIGID. Indeed ! I confess young lady, I did not expect quite so much as this from you.

SOPH. Nor did my father expect from his friend, that a trust so sacred as his daughter's welfare should be made the sport of family convenience.

LORD RIGID. I make it a rule never to dispute with ladies, and shall only observe that the carriage is at the gate.

Enter Charles.

I did not look for this pleasure quite so early, Sir.

CHARLES. It was equally unhop'd by me, my lord—I called on some business with Mr. Rigid—by your preparing to depart, I fear he is from home.

LORD RIGID. You'll find him here, at the Hermitage, Sir ; but he is far enough from home with respect to his duty—ladies.

CHARLES. With your permission, I'll conduct Miss Sophia.

Lady RIGID. You have hers, I dare swear, Sir.

CHARLES. [*while leading off Sophia*]. Delightful accident !

Lady RIGID. My lord, what do you mean to do ?

Lord

LORD RIGID. To follow that gentleman very closely : for he seems to have done more towards forming that girl's opinion in one hour, than your ladyship and I have been able to accomplish in the course of a whole guardianship.

[*Exeunt.*]

Enter Edmond Rigid on the opposite side.

EDMOND. I wished to have exchanged some words with lady Rigid, free from the presence of a witness—but, 'tis no matter. Hope and disappointment have formed so close an alliance in whatever relates to me, that my mind begins to feel but little from their usual succession to each other.

Re-enter Charles.

Charles, my friend ! your visits here have been so rare, and I am honoured with so few from others, unless on subjects of an unpleasant nature, that I can ill dispense with them.

CHARLES. I came now, on two accounts, each of which materially concerns us both.

EDMOND. Relate them.

CHARLES. I am in a double state of danger, from which you only can relieve me, for I, at this moment, run the hazard of falling most desperately in love, and of losing the friend I have hitherto been most attached to.

EDMOND. Your language is more earnest than what you often use. How can my assistance serve the love affair?

CHARLES. By your candidly telling me, whe-
I ther

ther the attentions it would be my pride to pay the young lady, who has just left the Hermitage, would injure any prospect you have formed.

EDMOND. You, perhaps, mean Sophia; though I never heard you mention her before.

CHARLES. I never saw her till to-day; nor, till to-day—

EDMOND. Knew what it was to love! Well, Sir, win her, and wear her.—My father's proposing her at this moment, as my wife, is as unfortunate a circumstance to me, as *you* would call the *loss* of her to you.

CHARLES. I have been so happy as to render her a service. I am going to dine with her brother, and have no fear of obtaining his consent; but now to the remainder of my business with you.

EDMOND. Which relates to the apprehended loss of your friend.

CHARLES. Edmond, you are under an engagement to relate your story to me. The time *must* be *now*; for my father has made me promise to justify or renounce you.

EDMOND. Come, then, summon your strength of mind to hear; but first tell me, and as you would esteem me, tell me truly, what do the world report of me?

CHARLES. To be unconscious of its charges, is to be innocent.

EDMOND. Does it follow, then, to know them argues guilt?

CHARLES.

CHARLES. I said not so. Oh, Edmond, I'm ashamed to call to my remembrance half what's said.

EDMOND. Then, Sir, I shall assist you. Around a circle, of which this very dwelling forms the centre, 'tis told by greybeards, youth, and even children, that I attempted once my father's life; that his new-married bride had not the power to shield her from my offered violence, though guarded by the sacred name of mother!

CHARLES. Such charges are too horrible to rest on any ground you could have form'd for them.

EDMOND. Yes, there *were* grounds—Nay, start not—more than this—it is reported I was leagued with gamesters;—licentiousness expelled me from the college; and that my companions of the army dismissed me from their ranks for cowardice.

CHARLES. That is impossible.

EDMOND. By your reluctance to think me guilty of it, you suppose that cowardice is worse than all the *crimes* I have enumerated.

CHARLES. At least, I'm sure that Edmond is no coward: come, my anxious ear longs for your vindication.

EDMOND. Have I recounted *all* that you have heard?

CHARLES. Yes; and have shadowed with the darkest tint the outline that detraction draws for you.

EDMOND. Nay, Sir, 'tis said too, I seduced the daughter of a worthy man, from his widowed home, I snatched the dearest comfort it contained, threw her, unpitied on a reckless world, and,—oh, most horrible! beheld her sire, torn with affliction, humbled to the dust, and did not dare assuage the grief I caused him.

CHARLES. And is this true?

EDMOND. I dare not contradict it.

CHARLES. Yet, tell me, Edmond, what could steel your mind against all sense of principle and nature?

EDMOND. A fiend, that long has fixed his venom'd fangs deep in my dearest feelings, Sir, the *world*!—In wise men's thoughts I was, from infancy, condemned, and early scorned to stoop for vindication.—From childhood driven thus to depend on my weak *self*, where is the wonder that I may have fallen?

CHARLES. Yet, to society you owe—

EDMOND. To society at large I shall not bend—To *you*, while I recount deeds more atrocious still, you must resolve to hear with patience, nay more—[*a small chime of bells is heard from the Pavilion*].—Hark? Charles, you must leave me—e're evening, I'll meet you here again.

CHARLES. Shall I, then, hear—?

EDMOND. I wou'd fain keep your friendship, and am sorry I rashly promised a disclosure of what may hazard it—at present leave me.

CHARLES

[*turns up the stage.*]

CHARLES. This hesitation defeats my hopes to find him what I wish'd—Yet I will come—if he eludes me then, we meet no more. [*Exit.*

EDMOND. Yes, he, too, is deceiv'd—he was to have been the husband of Suzette!—and had he seen her, his quick sense of what the world calls honour, might have foiled my best intentions.

Suzette enters from the Pavilion.

SUZETTE. Am I not soon returned? the subterraneous grotto, with the assistance of the servants, enabled me to do all I had hoped. I have intelligence that my father has kindly heard of my arrival—what I've prepared may soften him still more.

EDMOND. I wish you may succeed—I am glad you gave the signal from the turret—There was one with me, who—

SUZETTE. So earnest! was it my father?

EDMOND. No—why shou'd you imagine so?

SUZETTE. Because I think of no one else. I am so agitated! In two hours I am to meet him—no wonder he was angry if he heard it. What do you think has been reported?

EDMOND. Tell me, Suzette.

SUZETTE. It has been told, but I hope not to him, that I left home with the young man who formerly lived here, and whom, thank Heaven, I never saw.

EDMOND.

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EDMOND. And why thank Heaven?

SUZETTE. What an unkind question! Hav'n't I told you what a *wicked* man he was—and was it not you who protected me from his agents?

EDMOND. Do you not fear him now?

SUZETTE. No—with you I am in safety. It was at my earnest wish you bought this house and grounds, that, if not forgiven, I might, at least, be near my father.

EDMOND. Would he never have relented, had you married this *reprobate*—do *you* not pity the *poor outcast*.

SUZETTE. Heartily—I have done wrong, and felt too much, not to be very sorry for all else who have erred.

EDMOND. Sweet girl! united to such a mind as thine, perhaps he might—

SUZETTE. He! united to him! worlds would not have tempted me.

EDMOND. Indeed!

SUZETTE. Do you doubt me? Though I have reason to distrust myself—in this respect I *cannot* be *deceived*.

EDMOND. What being lives that may not be deceived? Who thinks he *cannot*, most deceives himself.

[*Ereunt.*]

End of Act III.

ACT IV.

SCENE I.—*A hall at Lord Rigid's.**Enter Sir Harry [tipsy] led by Charles.*

SIR HARRY. Thank ye, my good friend—do let us rest a little. [*sits on a settee*] We have got safe to Lord Rigid's after making each other as happy as any two lords in Christendom.

CHARLES. I should be much happier if you were in your chamber.

SIR HARRY. I sha'n't stir a foot—Richard! get me a pipe.

CHARLES. What, without lady Rigid's permission?

SIR HARRY. It's no use asking her—for she never smokes to my certain knowledge.

CHARLES. I shall avail myself of your promise of a horse, to convey me home, and must return immediately.

SIR HARRY. You're in a monstrous hurry; but if you *ride* no better than you *drink*, you'll be off before you wish it.

CHARLES. Perhaps so; but I shoudn't have thought the wine I saw you take wou'd so affect you.

Sir

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SIR HARRY. I was determined you shou'd have the very best the house afforded—so I made the landlord give me a taste from every binn of wine in his cellar. There were but *fourteen*; but I don't know how it is, the *least drop* before dinner plays the devil with me.

CHARLES. I see your sister yonder.—'Sdeath, I shall be quite ashamed to let her find you in such a situation.

SIR HARRY. Psha! don't I know your care of *me* was all a pretence to come and see *her*? Stay, you fool—If she comes say I'm asleep; for so I shall be in a minute or two; and if half an hour's courtship will be any refreshment to *you*, make the most of it.

CHARLES. But what can I say to excuse—

SIR HARRY. Why tell her if ever she dines where we did, not to call for any of that fellow's claret, for while the King's Arms can boast a batch of good home-brewed *constitution*, he may kick all the foreign stuff out of the country.

Enter Sophia.

SOPHIA. I thought my brother was here, Sir, [*sees him*]. Why, Harry! Good Heavens! no accident, I hope.

CHARLES. None but what rest will cure, Madam. Sir Harry's recent alarm for your safety, and his subsequent fatigue, have a little incommoded him.

→

SOPHIA.

SOPHIA. I fear I comprehend you, Sir --I'll order his servant to be call'd.

CHARLES. He has begg'd not to be disturbed, Madam, and, like *myself*, prefers his *present situation* to any other.

SOPHIA. You are very kind, and I shall ever be your debtor—but the presence of a brother, would not, in my guardian's eyes, sufficiently excuse this accidental intercourse.

CHARLES. Yet if the son of Lord Rigid is insensible to the happiness intended him—

SOPHIA. Even then your perseverance will injure my fortune, perhaps offend *your* family, and certainly be the ruin of that brother whose kindness for me is extreme, and who, by his good nature, is already too much in the power of my guardian.

Sir HARRY. [*rising suddenly*] Well, and what then? I tell you, if I were ruined twice over, and a civil word to my lord would save me from it a *third* time, he shou'dn't have it, if he used you ill.

SOPHIA. Nay, but my dearest brother—

Sir HARRY. What does she talk about me for, when she knows that as long as she's to be made happy, I don't care two-pence how it's brought about. [*Sophia goes up in tears.*]

CHARLES. But now you are making her *unhappy*.

Sir HARRY. What, because she's roaring?—

K

She

She does that on purpose. E'en I so plaguy fond of her that, this very day, when you saved her from being overturned, I ran first to take care of the black poney, because I knew he was her favourite? There, come, now don't cry—Gi's thy hand, and hold thy tongue, and let *me* tell the story my own way;—never be afraid of *me*, I'm the best temper'd fellow in the world when nothing vexes me.

SOPHIA. But you are so soon made angry.

Sir HARRY. Am I? Why then tell the story yourself, if you like it.

SOPHIA. I had better retire—And, indeed, if you would but—

Sir HARRY. I sha'n't stir, nor shall you neither [*takes her hand*]. I'll tell it myself. You must know, Sir, that when my father died, poor man!—Why, what the deuce makes thee cry *now*? I say, he died when we were young and innocent—that's a long while ago. She was a complete beauty, and I were reckon'd so like her, that folks used to say, there was a pair of us.

CHARLES. Well, Sir?

Sir HARRY. Well, Sir, my lord was our guardian, and she was to marry one of his three sons, two of whom died, and Sophy is just brought here, to see the third, for the second time in her life. Her fortune all goes without she has him; and I have just heard that so far from being an honest man, he—

CHARLES.

CHARLES. Whatever you have heard to the prejudice of Edmond Rigid, I cannot hear repeated, while I have the honour to call myself his friend.

Sir HARRY. I like you the better for saying so; but we'll talk more of that bye and bye. I had made a little too free with my cash upon the race-course, was bubbled by a set of blacklegs, and dipp'd my estate. My lord bought the mortgage, and will foreclose directly, if we don't do as he bids us;—but if she don't like it, she sha'n't, and there's an end.

SOPHIA. I had once determined not to yield too implicitly, where my happiness is so seriously at stake—but the full knowledge of his situation, which I *before* only suspected, now tells me 'tis a sacred duty not to marry without my lord's approval.

CHARLES. And may I hope that I am acquainted with the only bar to your permitting my future attentions? [*to Sophia.*]

SOPHIA. A bar not easily removed; for though the violation of domestic restraint may succeed in the false colouring of imagination, yet pleasure so obtained will have fiction for its basis, as long as *solid* happiness is to be the result of reason, and the reward of virtue. [*Exit.*]

CHARLES. Permit me to say, Sir Harry, if my father's interference with regard to your property can avail, you may command the

service of a man of business, who is also a man of honour.

Sir HARRY. You're kind, I own ; but things are not quite so bad as I made 'em out ; and enough yet remains as a hedge against the odds of his lordship's favour. A young man, I took for one of the gamblers who fleeced me, saved me a considerable sum, of which Sister knows nothing. And he who befriended me, only desired in return, that I should never tell Lord Rigid.

CHARLES. May I ask who this friend was ?

Sir HARRY. He called himself Wilson, but nobody knew him ; and the name he went by was not his own ; but I have talked myself quite dry, and am ready now for another glass.

CHARLES. No, no ; to bed, my friend.

Sir HARRY. You don't mean to say, that what I *have* drank has done me any harm ?

CHARLES. But *more* would do you harm. So, farewell, and remember, the hospitality of a convivial board would never lead us to excess, did not the ignis fatuus of pleasure in perspective point to the seductive charms of t'other bottle. [Exit.

Sir HARRY. And what's one's whole life but pleasure in perspective ? A pretty girl sees it in her looking-glass ; her expecting lover in an hour-glass ; I see it through a *drinking*-glass ; and if I happen to view it at the wrong end,
the

the bottle can't err, and must set me right again. So, I *will* have another, and if my Lord comes across *me* in my cups, while I ask him for a friend or a sentiment, I'll desire him to leave himself and his opinions out of the question.

[*Exit.*

Enter Lady Rigid and Sophia.

Lady RIGID. Why so unhappy, Sophia? You have seen too little of Edmond to dislike him. He has failings, but I believe his heart is excellent.

SOPHIA. Such an apology, Madam, is weak as it is common. If excellent *hearts* are only given to excuse *bad* actions, from what sources shall we look for *good* ones?

Lady RIGID. Really, Sophia, this style—

SOPHIA. My situation must plead my pardon. *You* married to please *your* friends; tell me, on your honour, do you know no real cause why I ought not to follow your Ladyship's example?

Lady RIGID. Alas! 'tis too true, I married to please my friends. Imperious circumstances forced me to wed the father, when—Hush! here comes my Lord.

Enter Lord Rigid.

Lord RIGID. I have just received another proof of Edmond's disobedience. He has dared
to

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to marry without my knowledge; a girl too, who will disgrace us. But he shall quit the Hermitage, shall quit the kingdom, and give up all claim to the notice of a justly irritated father.

Lady RIGID. Married! Is he really married?

Lord RIGID. You may be well surprised; but why should we wonder at a wretch, who—

Lady RIGID. Do not decide till you have given me a moment's audience.—I cannot look upon his total ruin. [*aside*]

Lord RIGID. No; every tie that joine dme to that worthless wretch is at an end.

Lady RIGID. As to what has passed, perhaps even I may have been deceived, perhaps have misinterpreted—

Lord RIGID. No—the anguish, the despair, your countenance, that fatal day, betrayed, too powerfully impress my memory.

SOPHIA. And yet this man, my *father's friend* had chosen for my husband.

Lord RIGID. Silence! To your Chamber!

Lady RIGID. [*to Sophia.*] Do not increase his passion by reply. I'll follow you. [*Exit Sophia.*]

Pray, my dear lord, hear what I have to urge.

Lord RIGID. Go—wait my coming, then.

[*turns up the stage.*]

Lady RIGID. Alas! this austerity has been my

[*Erit.*

Re-enter Sir Harry (more intoxicated).

Lord RIGID. And you find their master in as ill a humour for trifling with blockheads.

Sir HARRY. And so am I. I wouldn't trifle with your lordship for the world.

Lord RIGID. Sir, if you mean to take liberties!

Sir HARRY. I never take liberties with a man I don't like.

Lord RIGID. Then, Sir, what do you intend by this rudeness?

Sir HARRY. Only to say three things—my greys shall keep the four-fall stable—I'll choose my own wine, and Sophy shan't marry any body unless she likes.

Lord RIGID. Is this a time to be troubled with a brute, when my son—

Sir HARRY.

Sir HARRY. The less you say about *him* the better.—He's a very sad fellow, and I'm afraid takes after his father.

Lord RIGID. Sir, you have disgraced his father's mansion long enough, and nothing but my respect for the memory of *your* parent could induce me to submit to the degradations I have already.

Sir HARRY. Yes, your respect for my father made you wink at my extravagance, till you bought my estate, and took all possible care of my sister's, by marrying her to your son, to add it to your own.

Lord RIGID. An alliance with *my* family, young man, was an honour to which your sister might *aspire*.

Sir HARRY. Don't abuse my sister—If she don't marry Edmond, she may get an honest man.

Lord RIGID. Edmond shall hear of and punish this insolence.

Sir HARRY. Psha! He won't fight—you told me so yourself.

Lord RIGID. Then, Sir, his father will—away—sleep off your unmanly intemperance, prepare to ask my pardon, or expect to make severe atonement for your headstrong insolence.

[*Exit.*]

Sir HARRY. Not I indeed, old dignity. It's not the fashion to ask pardon now-a-days—when a man's in the *right*, he'd be *wrong* to do it;
and

and when he's in the wrong a real gentleman ought to be asham'd to own it. [*Exit.*

SCENE II.—*The Major's, as before.*

Enter Balance and the Major, through the garden.

MAJOR. [*looking round*] Did you ever know such a seducing baggage? not a flower here but exactly replaces some one I was attached to: the cunning hussey! I'll knock her down the moment I see her.

BALANCE. You see how she is beloved. Your servants must have been privy to a circumstance like this.

MAJOR. And how cou'd *they* assist her? I keep none now but Gregory the gardener, and old Dorothy.

BALANCE. Umph! this is *no* gardener's work, to be sure.

MAJOR. We'll soon see that. Why, Gregory!

Enter Gregory.

Well, Sir! I suppose you know who placed all these flowers here?

GREGORY. Why, I *do* know, and I do not, for a stranger assisted in it.

L

BALANCE.

74 GUILTY OR NOT GUILTY:

BALANCE. I suppose, too, *you* put some of 'em there.

GREGORY. Yes, I lent a hand—lord bless her, how could *she* have lifted—

MAJOR. She! who's she?

GREGORY. The stranger—a lady—she spoke very kindly of you; and, when, in moving that rosebush a thorn tore her delicate white hand, she said, 'never mind,—to please my father, I'd lose every drop in my veins.'

MAJOR. Did she indeed!

BALANCE. I'll be bound she did—old Gregory will swear it.

GREGORY. That I wou'd—Heaven bless her! she was the delight of my old eyes.

MAJOR. I say, Gregory, come here—who the devil are you talking of all this while?

GREGORY. Who? why, bless my heart, I didn't mention her name, did I?—I promised I wou'd not do that—and I hope I'm not such a rogue as to be worse than my word.

BALANCE. No—you only said she was her father's daughter.

MAJOR. And how dare you suffer her to enter my doors when I commanded you not?

GREGORY. Because *your orders* were given in a *passion*; and she asked me as if her little heart was *breaking*.

MAJOR. What right had she to break her heart—She might have been happy.

BALANCE. And *will* be, when she sees *you*.

GREGORY. She would have gone down on her knees; but I told her, if you caught her kneeling on my hot beds you'd be very angry.

MAJOR. Hark ye, Sir?—that's my livery, and you have worn it five-and-twenty years.

GREGORY. Well, I'm not ashamed, even of that. The livery of a good man disgraces nobody, and shews that the wearer has a character of his own, though he happens to wear the coat of another.

MAJOR. Umph! I begin to think you have worn mine rather too long.

GREGORY. Well, then, I must pull it off, that's all.

BALANCE. Nay, Major, confider—

GREGORY. Let him alone—I can work—I am only sixty-seven, and I have seen service enough in the Major's company to entitle me to wear the King's coat, who, Heaven bless him! is a master who would never desire me to pull it off again.

MAJOR. You shall pull off that, however, and then [*gives money*] go buy another, and smoke your pipe in my chimney-corner as long as you live; for it's a shame such a fellow as you shou'd be obliged to wear any coat but his own.

76 GUILTY OR NOT GUILTY:

BALANCE. Bravo, Major! Why don't you obey your officer, Gregory?

GREGORY. Me! what have I done to deserve being made a gentleman of in my old age?

MAJOR. Acted the part of a brave fellow; ran the risk of losing your own home, by letting my daughter come to hers, and shewn yourself a better man than your master, by feeling for the unfortunate.

BALANCE. And yet, I dare say, this was all a secret to old Gregory!

GREGORY. So it was, Sir! and I can tell master one worth two of it. Miss Suzy is in the next room, pale as ashes, frightened to death, and quiv'ring like quicksilver at every door that opens.

MAJOR. And I've a great mind to reduce you to the ranks again, for not telling me sooner. Where is she! the ungracious child, who could add to her former faults, that of being nine minutes in this house without letting her father know it. *[Exit.*

BALANCE. Well, Gregory! what do you say to this?

GREGORY. That it's all as it shou'd be, Sir! and that when good luck tumbles into the house, its better to catch fast hold of it, than to stand looking to see what crevice it came in at.

[Exit.

BALANCE.

BALANCE. I'll go and seek food for my journal in this scene of felicity.—My presence may be necessary to keep things even, too; for I know my friend the major so well, that if the smallest obstacle should lie in the road he has just found to happiness, he'll be pretty sure to stumble over it. [Exit.

SCENE III.—*The garden at the Hermitage.*

Enter Charles and Edmond.

EDMOND. Remember, that what I am relating, I prove but by my words—if I deceive you, be the blame your own.

CHARLES. Go on—I've heard from others you were the victim of your parents partiality for their other offspring.

EDMOND. Yes; I was the rejected, the despised—till an event, sudden as horrible, decided competition. My brothers were suffered to take their pleasure in a sailing yatch, which I had used to steer, and that day asked in vain to bear them company.—A servile tutor undertook the vessel's charge, the two youths paid him no obedience, and in some resulting contest o'erset the boat, and all were lost.

CHARLES. From what you feel at present, I can picture your parents anguish.

EDMOND. In my mother's phrenzy, I heard
her

her make the dreadful declaration, that had I perished, and her darlings lived, she had not grieved. A relative, who saw my treatment, left me this estate, on condition I did not marry till a certain age. I laid the writings at my father's feet—this was called affectation—where's the wonder, then, I sank into a gloomy apathy, which formed fresh subject for reproof.

CHARLES. Your mother—

EDMOND. Died shortly after—I left home for college—the social kindness of my fellow students was so new to me, that dissipation followed, and in a nightly brawl—Oh! Charles, never shall I forget that dreadful scene—worlds should not tempt me to renew—

MAJOR. [*speaks without*] Don't tell me of his being busy.

EDMOND. The Major!

Major, entering.

MAJOR. When an old soldier seeks his mortal enemy, who shall bar his passage?

EDMOND. Sir, if you come—

MAJOR. I come to relate two short stories, and, then, leave *you* to make the application.

EDMOND. I am attentive, Sir.

MAJOR. A veteran, who had spent his best blood in the battles of old England, brought home his honour, half-pay, nine scars, and an
only

only child—she was snatched from him by seduction;—the old soldier was just about to forgive her every thing, when he learned she had married, without knowing it, a most notorious villain!

CHARLES. Sir, if you wou'd have patience you might have heard—

MAJOR. How the wretch seduced her—I'll tell you, Sir—He found her in the cottage of poverty, raising up the sick and feeble, like the benevolence of Heaven, when it falls on the drooping flower—He, then, became charitable himself, made presents to the poor, and love to the innocent, and, creating sympathy in the bosom of a girl, who had *no mother* to advise her, he assumed another name, taught her to weep at the romance of his feign'd misfortunes, seiz'd a moment of weakness, which, of itself, would have been a barrier of adamant to an *honest* man, and sacrificed the virtue of my child!

CHARLES. But having made amends by marriage—

MAJOR. He becomes on a level with the man, who, when detected in stealing my property, offers to purchase it. Sir, [*to Edmond*] I knew *you* could produce no argument of defence, and therefore came provided with one a-piece for us. [*offers pistols*] Take your choice.

EDMOND.

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EDMOND. [*takes a pistol*] Take your own amends, Sir:—if a mad action *must* be committed, one agent is quite sufficient.

William *enters, and gives Charles a letter.*

MAJOR. What! won't he fight!—Has my daughter married a man that won't fight?

CHARLES. [*gives the letter to Edmond*] Leave us, William, and wait for me at 'Triangle's. Major, you must defer your resentment; a business of such importance calls my friend away, that nothing may delay him here a moiment.

MAJOR. Sir, if he stirs one step—

EDMOND. [*to the Major*] When we meet again, I shall be ready to account, as far as I am able, for my conduct. Were I not instantly to execute the duty *this* prescribes, [*the letter*] I should be a greater poltroon than even you have set me down for. [*Exit with Charles.*]

MAJOR. If you dare to go till I—[*presents the pistol.*]

WILLM. Stop, Sir! [*seizing his arm*] If you do that, you'll shoot somebody.

MAJOR. I mean it. [*Just as he is about to fire, Suzette enters, followed by Balance, throws herself on her knee, and exclaims, "Oh, spare him! spare him!"*]

MAJOR. [*dropping his pistol*] My child! What might my rashness have condemn'd me to!

BALANCE.

BALANCE. Against whom, for Heaven's sake was this directed?

MAJOR. No matter—it has struck myself, and killed, I hope, my foible. Oh, my child! never shall passion lead me again to acts so desperate. Harkye, good fellow—find out your master, and his friend, and—[William, *in bowing awkwardly, presents the pistol*] Take care—I shall hate the sight of a pistol as long as I live. [Exit with Suzette and Balance.]

WILLM. Well, in one pull of a trigger what mischief may be done! It's no but hold it a this'n, and it's off like a shot. Now, I shou'd be ashamed to bring down a natural countryman wi'aught but a fist or a cudgel, because, then, he might get up again—and, for my own part, I'd rather be thrashed wi'the vulgarest bit of English oak, than shot dead wi'the genteelest pair of pops in Christendom. [Exit.]

End of Act IV,

ACT V.

SCENE I.—Triangle's House, as before.

Enter William.

WILLM. Young master bid me wait for him here—I fancy Mr. Triangle's not at home. What a power of business he must have on his hands!—What wi' boys i't' school, ladies i't' library, and gentlemen i't' news-room, he stands here like a three-corner'd finger-post, to put folks i't' way of all the learning, politics, and tittle tattle o' the whole village.

Enter Gregory, from the reading-room.

GREGORY. Ah! what, William! I have been looking for my master, the Major, he went out in a monstrous passion, so I thought he might have stept as far as the club of Cool Reasoners.

WILLM. Oh, no; *I* know where *he* went.—He went a-shooting.

GREGORY. A shooting!

WILLM. Yes; your young mistress, and my old master peep'd into the very mouth of his pistol, just as he was aiming at Mr. Rigid.

GREGORY. He couldn't have hurt him if he had fired.

WILLM.

WILLM. No! Why?

GREGORY. All owing to my forgetfulness—I was ordered to load master's pistols, and, as I'm an honest man, it never once entered my head to put a bullet in either of them.

WILLM. If you *had*, it might have *enter'd* more *heads* than yours.—But your master's gone home, swearing most bitterly that he'll never put himself in a passion again.

GREGORY. Is he?—then, if I'm out of the way, I shall get it finely? But I suppose what you have told me is a secret—and so I shall keep it. [Exit.

WILLM. A secret! to be sure, or else I wou'dn't have mention'd it. Does he think I got nothing to do but to tell what every body knows?

Enter Triangle.

TRIAN. Every body knows—Why, did you hear the report?

WILLM. No—the pistol didn't go off.

TRIAN. Pistol! what pistol? I mean about Mr. Edmond Rigid.

WILLM. He went off sure enough, or he mightn't have scap'd shot free, as far as *he* knew.

TRIAN. This fellow's as hard to make out as an explanatory note. Did any mischief take place from the fire of t'other party?

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WILLM. There was no firing at all, I tell you.

TRIAN, I heard something about a duel; but what you tell me is downright assassination—A custom, as we read in the geographical grammar, prevalent only in Italy.

WILLM. I know no more of Italy than the pope of Rome; but this I *do* know, that if it hadn't been for Gregory's carelessness, the young *woman* might ha' been kill'd, and the crowner must have brought it in *manslaughter*.

TRIAN. I shall never be able to construe his meaning till I have ask'd the question who or what—Do you know any thing of a duel that may, might, wou'd, cou'd or shou'd take place between certain persons in this vicinity?

WILLM. Vicinity! No, nor in the neighbourhood neither.

TRIAN. I heard that you had taken a challenge from Sir Harry Pointer to Mr. Charles Balance, and that Edmond Rigid is to be his second on the occasion.

WILLM. What, my young master going to be shot, and I stand talking to you!—I'll find him if he's above ground; and if any body offers to take aim at a single button of his waistcoat, I'll break every bone in his body, if it's only to prevent mischief! [Exit.

TRIAN. I wish I knew the truth of this affair—at present, it stands like a sum in *Position*,
where

where by false numbers we discover true ones;
—for example—

Enter Mrs. Balance.

Let me see—[*ruminating.*]

MRS. B. Mr. Triangle, have you heard where my husband is?

TRIAN. I was just going to put the question.

MRS. B. His good nature leads him into such a number of errors.

TRIAN. [*abstractedly.*] Place each error against its respective position, and multiply them cross-wise.

MRS. B. Nonsense!

TRIAN. Nonsense! it's the art of discovering truth by falsehood:—for instance—suppose one wants to know another's age—Says *W*, I'm forty—says *I*, I'm as old as *W*, and half as old as *U*—says *U*, I'm as old as both of you put together.

MRS. B. Sir, I say, it is no such thing. Do you mean to affront me?

TRIAN. *Me!* I'm as innocent as Joseph Andrews.

MRS. B. Then, do you know where my husband is?

TRIAN. I believe William said he was at the Major's.

MRS. BALANCE. Then, why didn't you say so before? They have been fright'ning me about his having a duel with lord Rigid, and
you;

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you, instead of giving a direct answer to my question, are asking my age indeed!

TRIAN. Oh; that was only a question in arithmetic. There's twenty such in our school books—As thus—A man met a girl carrying poultry, and, says he—

Enter Nancy.

ah, my pretty maid, where are you going with your twenty chickens?

NANCY. Twenty chickens!

TRIAN. But, suppose you had as many more, half as many more, and five besides——

MRS. B. Don't mind that man; he's mad, child.

NANCY. La, Ma'am! I beg pardon; but I came to look for our William. I'm flurried out of my wits, for they will have it he's gone to fight with young master about the Major's daughter.

MRS. B. Then it's my Son Charles, after all, who, I dare say, is to fight with his lordship! do, pray, dear Mr. Triangle, run and see into the truth of this, and bring us word at the Major's.

TRIAN. I will, I'll run like a new novel full of horrid ideas.

NANCY. And, pray, now, see after our William.

MRS. B. And don't come away without Charles upon any account.

NANCY.

NANCY. And, tell William if he must fight, I think he might find some folks as well worth quarrelling for as the Major's daughter, though she *has*——

MRS. B. Silence, minx ! And tell Charles to remember, he has *volunteer'd* to fight to *pre*serve the laws of the country ; and he must be a deserter from the cause, if, by engaging in a duel, he dares to fight *against* them.

[*Exit.*

NANCY. And tell William, if any thing happens to him, I shall be so angry, that I . . I . . I shall break my heart, that's what I shall.

[*Exit, whimpering.*

TRIAN. I wish some one wou'd *tell me* where these gentlemen are to be found—Report mentioned the North Meadow—perhaps, by going the direct contrary road, I may chance to fall in with them. I never saw a duel in my life ; but I suppose they are all alike, if it's only from their natural absurdity.

[*Exit.*

SCENE II.—*a Landscape.*

Enter Charles and Edmond.

CHARLES. I am sorry we were a second time interrupted ;—I appears by this mad baronet's note, that, after my departure, he drank more, wine, quarell'd with your father once, and meeting him again, his lordship's passion so far overcame

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came him, that he condescended to give a blow ; unless Sir Harry, who has asked me here, as his second, will accept an apology, the case is desperate.

EDMOND. And I know my father too well to hope for concession on his side.—I have, however, sent him a message to create some delay,—and this being the exact time of the meeting, I have, perhaps, succeeded.

CHARLES. Here comes Sir Harry—you had better walk aside, while I first try whether there is no remedy.

EDMOND. Be quick then ; for it must be settled one way or other, before his lordship comes. I have the Major's pistol here, which, in case of the worst, will be better employ'd in defending my own father, than in being opposed to the parent of my wife. [*goes up the stage*]

CHARLES. [*looking out*] Bless me, the baronet looks plaguy furious !

Enter Sir Harry.

Well, Sir, I have repaired to the spot you named, in hopes to see your quarrel end in honorable reconciliation.

Sir HARRY. [*with much agitation*] I am afraid not, my feelings are very much hurt—every man has feelings, Mr. Balance, I am extremely obliged by your coming, tho' his lordship has since sent me word he brings no second ; but you can act as a common friend, we shall have warm work, I dare say. Who's that

that gentleman? a surgeon perhaps,—that's proper and considerate—every thing that's proper ought to be done on such an occasion; and tho' I am called an unpolished clown, I shall bridle my passion, walk over the course with all imaginable politeness, and take as good aim as I possibly can.

CHARLES. You speak, Sir; like a man of judgment and precision.

Sir HARRY. Yes; I have calculated all the odds, provided against every thing, and shou'd there be a necessity foreither of us to escape, my black horse Charon will carry to the world's end.

CHARLES. But, Sir Harry—

Sir HARRY. One word more—In requital of your double service to Sophia and myself, in this packet I have bequeathed you my two best hunters, with directions that my sister and the rest of my stud may be taken proper care of.

CHARLES. And, now Sir, permit me to introduce the gentleman you take for a surgeon—Sir Harry Pointer, this is the honourable—

Sir HARRY. Mr. Wilson! the very man who saved me from gamesters, and preserved the only independence which, in that paper, I have been able to leave my sister.

EDMOND. If you conceive yourself indebted to me, you have ample means to acquit yourself, and impress me with an obligation of the last consequence.

SIR HARRY. If there is a thing on earth, I *can* do, command me.

EDMOND. You expect lord Rigid here on a serious appointment—I have the honour to be much interested for him; oblige me, therefore, as a man and a friend, by endeavouring to settle this affair.

SIR HARRY. It shall be settled the moment he comes. [*produces pistols*] Here are the ponies that are to start; they are small but compact, and when once they go off, I'd match 'em for speed with the first racers in England.

EDMOND. We have no time for levity, Sir. You profess'd I might command you—I do beseech you, most earnestly, if his lordship shews the least inclination that you will be reconciled to him.

SIR HARRY. That is the only thing in the world I wou'd refuse you.

CHARLES. But why so inveterate?

SIR HARRY. Sir, I have received a blow, which fell with double weight, because the man who gave it, calls me his inferior.

EDMOND. Will not provocation on your part extenuate the offence?

SIR HARRY. I had taken my wine to be sure; but, ignorant as I am, I know that such a situation degraded me, more than any language of mine cou'd injure his lordship. For the words of a drunken man leave nobody but himself the worse for them.

CHARLES. Well, but as you own to intemperate language—

Sir HARRY. His lordship should have waited till I had sober sense enough to plead guilty—An English constitution would no more punish a man before trial, than I shou'd demand the King's plate without a race, tho' I'm sure I've a mare that's able to win it.

EDMOND. And how can your lips venture to profane the name of an English constitution, when you are in the very act of violating its most sacred obligations? Besides, when we may have to oppose an enemy—we should find other marks for practice than the *bosoms* of our *friends*.

Sir HARRY. Well, you may leave talking, for yonder comes his lordship—I have kept him waiting, and it will be respectful in me to meet him.

EDMOND. Respect for the man you mean to murder!

Sir HARRY. Psha! stand out of the way.

EDMOND. Not a step, Sir—and, sooner than you shall proceed, I'll venture this, [*shewing the Major's pistol*] which was given me by a man of honour, even against your favourites.

Sir HARRY. There—he stops a man on the King's highway, and then talks of the laws of his country.

EDMOND. I am, at present, arm'd in their *defence*, the *genuine* cause of honour! which no true Briton will *desert* with life.

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Sir HARRY. Nay, don't be ill natur'd ; but if we must pop at one another, let us exchange weapons, and do it like gentlemen.

EDMOND. [*gives his pistol*] you may take mine, Sir ; but I wish no exchange—come, come—you must, and shall listen to reason.

Enter Lord Rigid.

LORD RIGID. My Son !

Sir HARRY. His Son !

LORD RIGID. Edmond, what brought you here ?

EDMOND. My duty, Sir ; of which you must permit me to convince this gentleman.

LORD RIGID. Impossible ! I am surprised and pleased with this proof of your affection, but must beg to stand my own ground.

CHARLES. Sir Harry will, I am sure, render this friendly contest unnecessary.

Sir HARRY. When folks come to fight, friendly contests are out of the question.

LORD RIGID. Then, take your place, Sir—I gave the blow, and have a right to abide by the consequence, come, Sir !

EDMOND. Hold, Sir ! I shall not quit my post, and if the injury you have received will justify your aiming at the father through the heart of his son, take your revenge, and fire !

Enter William hastily.

WILLM. Don't offer to fire, for the love of peace and quietness !

CHARLES.

CHARLES. William, how dare you!—do you not tremble for your improper conduct?

WILLM. Yes, Sir, I do tremble at your improper conduct; and with all due respect I shall act the part of a quiet subject, and knock any gentleman down that makes *Game* of his own kind, by going a man-shooting.

Sir HARRY. [*presenting his pistol*] Sirrah, do you see this? [*William looks close at it*]

WILLM. Yes, Sir; and I believe here's the fellow to it. [*shewing the other*] And if old Gregory has charged the one as well as the other, I'll stand fire as long as you please—How did you get him, Sir?

EDMOND. From me—I received it as proper for the purpose of a similar meeting.

WILLM. Yes, Sir—and it would be proper if such were always used when friends fall out; for neither of these have swallowed an ounce of lead these six weeks.

Lord RIGID. Not loaded!

Sir HARRY. Indeed! I don't wonder at your keeping your post.

EDMOND. Sir, you must be aware—

Sir HARRY. Sir, *you* must be aware that report says you always objected to face a bullet, and that it was *fear* to fight a duel which made you quit the army.

EDMOND. Yes, Sir—it was. I hold no lives more sacred than those engaged to serve their country's

country's cause, and I *did* fear to lose mine in the base attempt to lessen the number of our brave defenders.

WILLM. I'll take my oath before his worship, that nobody but Gregory and I knew a word about the pistol.

Sir HARRY. Ay, ay, you came in at your proper cue, I warrant; but I'll have satisfaction of my lord yet—And you, Sir, [*to Charles*] may depend on't that my sister shall never marry a man who would stand by, as a second, and see his friend fight with an empty pistol. [*Exit.*]

EDMOND. For Heaven's sake, Charles, follow, and convince him. His lordship and I will wait you at the Hermitage.

WILLM. Nay, Sir; but I were bid to tell you, that your wife and her father are waiting for you at t' Major's.

CHARLES. At the Major's then I'll meet you. Out of my sight, Sir! [*to William*] To your officious impertinence we owe the whole of this embarrassment. [*Exit.*]

WILLM. Well, I'll not go far; for if folks are so plaguy angry because they cou'dn't do one another mischief, there's no knowing what they may be at next. . . . [*Exit.*]

Lord RIGID. Edmond, even this defence of my life requires some explanation.

EDMOND. If, Sir, you wou'd condescend to accompany me to the Major's, you shall be informed

formed from witnesses, whose testimony, for or against me, will have more weight than mine.

LORD RIGID. Your own wou'd be sufficient, cou'd I but hope to find you innocent in what regards my lady Rigid, who has never yet cleared up that—

Enter Triangle and Sophia.

TRIAN. There, Madam—I promis'd to find out the place for you; but hadn't we met Sir Harry to direct us, I believe we might as well have looked for ghosts in Gil Blas, or politeness in parson Trulliber.

SOPHIA. My Lord, I am desired by lady Rigid to beg you will see her instantly—Before the fatal effect of what she trembles to hear you are engaged in may prevent her; she wishes to impart something most material to herself, to you, and to that gentleman.

LORD RIGID. The meeting which causes her alarm has terminated without misfortune, and I shall most willingly listen to any thing in his favour.

EDMOND. May I accompany you?

LORD RIGID. You had better relieve the apprehensions of the Major and his family, for your safety, since it appears this circumstance has found its way through the whole village already. You shall there soon hear from me.

[Exit.

SOPHIA. *[going, returns]* Wasn't Mr. Charles Balance engaged in this affair?

EDMOND.

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EDMOND. He is perfectly safe, and will be as perfectly happy when he hears of the interest you so kindly take in his welfare.

SOPHIA. But, pray don't tell him that I made any particular inquiry. *[Exit.]*

EDMOND. I shall, you may depend on it. *[Exit.]*

TRIAN. Well, I came to see a duel; but there seems no sign of any engagement having taken place.

Enter William and Nancy.

WILLM. Oh, but there has—here's Nancy, like t'other fine lady, cou'dn't rest till she came to see after her sweetheart; and so I've made an engagement that when we are married I'll ha' nought to do wi' fighting, without she makes one of the party.

TRIAN. There's nothing improper in that. So you are about to become Mrs. Wallflower in good earnest. *[To Nancy.]*

NANCY. There's nothing improper in *that*, is there Mr. Triangle?

TRIAN. Oh, no; you'll have a nursery full of blooming young Wallflowers, and, when old enough to be transplanted, send them to flourish under my cultivation.

WILLM. You shall teach the boys to do every thing, but fight like gentlemen; though I'll freely give 'em leave to pop at a partridge by the side of a friend, or look into the mouth of a cannon in the teeth of an enemy.

NANCY.

NANCY. They sha'n't be taught any such tricks; and if ever I catch one of 'em looking into the mouth of a cannon, I'll—why, what do you laugh at? For shame, William!

TRIAN. I see *you* can reckon your chickens, though a little while ago you wou'dn't let *me* do it.

WILLM. Never mind, lass—I only say, that if gunpowder must be in fashion, my boys shall learn to make a proper use of it.

TRIAN. Ay, ay; only send 'em to my school, and I'll "teach their young ideas how to *shoot*," I warrant you. [*Exeunt.*]

SCENE III.—THE MAJOR'S.

Enter Balance, Mrs. Balance, *the* Major, Suzette, Charles, *and* Sir Harry.

CHARLES. I am sorry you have been kept in so painful a suspense. Your husband is safe, Suzette: and it materially concerns him and you, Major, to vouch to Sir Harry, that the pistol you gave Edmond was unloaded.

MAJOR. Do you mean to insinuate that a veteran wou'd go to the field without ammunition? [*rings a bell.*]

Sir HARRY. I shou'd as soon think of riding without spurs.

Enter Gregory, *out of* livery, *with a pipe in his mouth.*

MAJOR. Who loaded my pistols yesterday?

O

GREGORY.

GREGORY. Your man.

MAJOR. Well Sir! and are not *you*—

GREGORY. I once was; but now I smoke my pipe in the chimney corner, as you bade me. And if I *did* forget to charge the pistols, it belongs not to the *gentleman* you have just made me, to answer for the faults of your servant Gregory.

Sir HARRY. [*to the Major.*] Why then, Mr. Wilson, as he chose to call himself, did not know that the pistol you gave him was without a ball.

MAJOR. Who the devil's Mr. Wilson?

CHARLES. He means Edmond Rigid, Sir.

MAJOR. Aye the reprobate who married—

SUZETTE. No, my dear father, indeed you are mistaken, we only bought the house of that unfortunate man.

Sir HARRY. Well, here he comes to tell who he is himself.

Enter Edmond.

EDMOND. Suzette, I have just heard how narrow an escape you have had.

Sir HARRY. And I have learn'd that I have been mistaken in suspecting you, for which I ask your pardon.

EDMOND. Sir, it is thus mistake has ever been my enemy.

Enter Lord Rigid.

LORD RIGID. Edmond, I have in vain sought lady Rigid where she appointed—and have intruded here in hopes—

MAJOR. My lord, I'm glad to see you, and, when some things are explained, may perhaps shake your son by the hand—don't be surpris'd, young man, I can't help it, because the girl you have seduced would otherwise be miserable.

EDMOND. Suzette has been too long so, and 'tis time to prove a secret marriage was her only crime.

MAJOR. A secret marriage! was she not carried off by hired scoundrels, and didn't she return and tell me she was rescued by a stranger?

EDMOND. *I* was that stranger, who for the first time saw and saved her—the villain and his minions disappeared, and the blame of all rested of course on me.

SUZETTE. And was *you* the man I have been taught to fear! Ah, Edmond, why have you deceived me?

EDMOND. Yes, I am he to whom you oft have said that death were better than any union with him you little thought you then conversed with—Sir, had your daughter known me, that secret marriage never had taken place, for which you banished her. I brought her back, pretending to have bought the Hermitage—for this imposture, which a hard world's injustice put me on, I do beseech her pardon, though in asserting I was not a reprobate, I never used deceit.

LORD RIGID. Your not marrying till a certain period, being the condition on which you held

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your estate, I can suppose your reason for a secret union; but surely I—

EDMOND. Your lordship at that time had forbad all intercourse.

MAJOR. But, zounds! hadn't *I* a right to be inform'd, Suzette.

SUZETTE. Could I ruin him whose all depended on the secret?

MAJOR. You might have trusted *me*.

SUZETTE. Indeed!

MAJOR. Yes—I'd have proclaimed it to the whole world—Harkye, run to the church register, scratch out that spider's web, and tell Mr. Amen that for once he is outwitted.

GREGORY. Well, though I'm no servant I'll go on that errand, however. [*Exit.*

Sir HARRY. Well, but my good friend! your estate didn't depend on your going by the name of Wilson!

EDMOND. An assumed name was necessary to foil, at their own arts, the gamesters who had nearly ruined you, hence I was reckoned their associate.

CHARLES. Whence arose the false report of Edmond's cowardice?

EDMOND. At college I beheld a scene of *modern honour*, too dreadful to repeat, but which resolved me never to be a duellist; and here I answered for the fault of one who else would have been ruin'd—I was expelled, my companions applauded me, and kept the secret.

Afterwards,

Afterwards, at camp, a headstrong youth ask'd satisfaction for an insult given by himself, I answered with my cane, and left the army.

MAJOR. Enough! you attacked your *father* with a *sword*.

LORD RIGID. No, Sir—and yet that day of mystery—

EDMOND. Lives in my memory ever—Sir, that day has cost me nights of sleepless misery, or if the weight of sorrow *closed* my eyes, in fancy I beheld the hateful scene, then waked and walk'd abroad to meet the glance of pity or contempt, from those who warn'd their children, as I pass'd, to shun the *Reprobate*—all were my enemies, and but for these [*taking a hand of Charles and Suzette*] this world had still remained a blank to Edmond, to whom no living creature bore affection, for whom no living creature heav'd a sigh!

LORD RIGID. This is no vindication—

EDMOND. Thus called on, I proceed; shunn'd and disgrac'd for what I last related, I sought for consolation in the dwelling of a fancied friend, whose niece, the fascinating Julia, won my affections.

SUZETTE. Your *affections*, Edmond!—

EDMOND. *Are* and will be your's—they once were her's of whom I spoke, but she in my absence, threatened and deceived by false accounts of me, was wedded to a rich and powerful rival.

Lord

LORD RIGID. Edmond! [*much agitated.*]

EDMOND. My father also married, and on my return from travel, the first I met at home was—Julia! [*points to lady Rigid who enters with Sophia.*]

LORD RIGID. Your Julia!

LADY RIGID. Spare not—proceed—you found your father's wife.

EDMOND. Not knowing this, I clasp'd her to my bosom—she in her grief exclaimed, ‘I know not what of treachery’—my father entered, and, ere he well cou'd see me for his rage, assail'd me with his sword; for his sake, not my own, I forced it from him, the servants thence reported that I had dared attempt a parent's life.

LADY RIGID. Alas, I knew not then you were his father, and terrified, forbore an explanation, which each day's criminal delay rendered more painful—he return'd my letters, and generously concealed his innocence to preserve my peace.

LORD RIGID. My good, my noble son, how have I been deceived! how cou'd you bear—

EDMOND. Indignant *pride* sometime sustain'd me, but when in solitude that spirit fell, it then became my happy chance to rescue thee, Suzette, who re-inspired me with desire to live—not daring at first to own I was the man whom even her kind nature had been taught to hate, like you; [*to lady Rigid*] I still put off the

the dreaded explanation, pass'd for another, met her often in her way to help the needy cottager; and in a happy moment won her hand.

LADY RIGID. Fit recompense for such a heart as yours,

EDMOND. Yet have I much of error to atone for—prejudged from infancy, a sullen feeling has often check'd my wish to undeceive, though I severely felt, no pointed weapon can inflict a wound so deep, so cureless, and so agonizing, as poisonous calumny!

BALANCE. Now, Major, what think you,—Guilty or not Guilty?

TRIAN. [*as he enters.*]—Stop, *summing up* is a part of my business.

MAJOR. I had sworn to knock his brains out; but, as he has married my daughter I'll not interfere between man and wife.

TRIAN. Right, matrimonial arithmetic shou'd have nothing to do with *division*.—

SUZETTE. Dear father, it is thus your goodness will ever counteract your anger.

MAJOR. Hold your tongue! my anger was just, and nobody but myself shall say to the contrary. [*Going*]

EDMOND. And will you leave us, Sir?

MAJOR. 'Tis only for something I have left up stairs.

SUZETTE. Cannot I——

MAJOR. Stay with your husband.—Did'nt
you

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you tell me the child was there? [*Apart to Suzette.*]

SUZETTE. [*flies into his arms.*] Good father!

MAJOR. The hussy means *Grand-father*.

TRIAN. Aye, there's another Scholar for me.

MAJOR. But you are a coaxing baggage, and always have your way in every thing.

Lord RIGID. Sir Harry, I must now apologise to you.

Sir HARRY. That's kind, my Lord ; and here are a pair, who, if well match'd in Hymen's cur-ricule, will never think of pulling different ways.

SOPHIA. I wish you'd mind your own cur-ricule, which has nearly been the death of me, Sir Harry.

BALANCE. And my son, who saved you, has already asked my consent to enter your name in the family journal.

TRIAN. Give it him Sir—my boys shall attend the young couple to church, I'll put the wedding in all the newspapers, and your journal shall have a place in my library.

Mrs. BAL. You do every thing in such a hurry—It isn't that we want to *know* the Lady's fortune ; but———

Lord RIGID. As a proof I never connived at her brother's extravagance, for my own sake, I have been lending him his sister's money, for which she shall receive legal interest, and dispose of the mortgage as she pleases.

Sir

Sir HARRY. Then I'll curb my love of racing; pull in my expenses; and if ever I fight with a friend, old Gregory shall load my pistols.

EDMOND. And now, Sir, if acknowledgment of error may entitle us to plead for pardon, on such a claim will we venture to indulge a hope of general forgiveness; for my own part I shall rejoice sincerely if the mistaken light, in which I have been view'd, may induce my friends in future to censure with indulgence, and pause ere they condemn.

END OF THE COMEDY.

EPILOGUE,

WRITTEN BY THE AUTHOR OF THE COMEDY,
AND SPOKEN BY MR. ELLISTON, IN THE CHARACTER
OF A COUNSELLOR.

MY Ladies, Luds, and Gem'men of the Jury,
This cause is not yet finish'd, I assure ye:
Counsellor Critical, who thinks with me,
Moves to shew cause against the Author's plea:
For we can prove, and that with ease, before ye,
These scenes are stolen from a well-known story;
And all the sorrows you heard me relate,
In ev'ry sentence mark the *Reprobate*,
Who for low characters has searched each hovel,
And taken *this here* Play from *that there* Novel.
If every Scribbler thus his subject chuses,
They'll act next in the *Temple of the Muses*:
Eastward may all Dramatic folks repair,
And *Covent Garden* quit for *Finsbury Square*.
While the *Minerva Press*, with equal gain,
At *Leadenhall*, will rival *Drury Lane*.
Besides—this Muse, you must to prison send her;
I've *evidence* that she's an *old* offender.
And first I call, her wicked pranks to show,
A very worthy Jew—*Abednego*!
Come into Court. “Vel, vat you vant mit me?”
“I'll shwear de truth, vatever it may be.”
“You know this Poet?” “Know him! I'll engage
“He's a great rogue—he brought *me* on de Stage
“Against ma vill, along mit an old doctor,
“And a young shemale; in a bed-room lockt her
“Alone mit me—I, that have got a vife,
“And never did such things in all ma life.
“I told 'em plain enough, ven all vas done,
“I'd take de law a-top of every von;

“I'll

" I'll have such damages!—But shtop a bit—
 " Vere vill it come from, all vat I shall get?
 " Poor poets pockets are so long in filling,
 " Dey hardly knows a guinea from a shilling.
 " And tho' they write so fine, and talk so big—
 " I vonders how his worship sells his vig!"

" Where's Matthew Motto?"—" Here, Sir, *coram nobis*."
 " You keep an inn?"—" I do—*sic non vobis*."
 " Well, Sir, your evidence; but take good heed,
 " We can't accept the *Will* here for the *Deed*.
 " Your inn's at Oxford?"—" No, I beg your pardon,
 " My sign's *cui bono*, Sir, at *Covent Garden*.
 " *Noli prosequi*—I am come to sue
 " The prisoner."—" How did he injure you?"
 " How? *Suaviter in modo*, Sir, he came
 " Last *sine die*, with sticks, staves, and flame:
 " My friends insulted;—and, Sir, I'm no joker,
 " Burnt all their boxes with a red hot poker.
 " In short, in spite of all he may advance,
 " Behaved quite *Honi soit qui mal y pense*."

" Call Peter Pullhaul!"—" 'Vast! my lads, belay?
 " I knows the lubber that has launch'd this Play;
 " And he'd palaver you, that he made me
 " Sail in a *Cabinet* to Italy,
 " To serve a foreign Court, as if so be
 " As how that you'd believe a British Tar
 " Would fly his colours, while his King's at war!
 " No! while old England calls us to our guns,
 " On sea or shore, ve, John Bulls, never runs.
 " And as for Frenchified great Lords, d'ye see,
 " Ve does't mind their Emperors, not ve."

I cou'd, with many more my cause support,
 Of characters well known to all the Court;

But, Gem'men, I contend, unless some flaw
Appear in the Indictment, law is—law,
And evidence is strong, and fact is fact,
And you, I need'at tell you how to act.
To prove him guilty, I have done my part,
If, trying to amuse you with his art;
And beg most earnestly—I hope I'm right,
He may appear again another night.
When, since with your kind sanction we are greeted,
“ Guilty or Not,” this Play shall be repeated.

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